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The Lebanese Shi'a and Political Violence

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UNRISD Discussion Paper 42

April 1993

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ISSN 1012-6511

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Preface

This Discussion Paper attempts an analysis of political violence in Lebanon with a focus on the Shi'i community. The spectacular and widely publicized events most often associated with the recent history of the country - car bombings and the rash of abductions of Western citizens, for example - are revealed as only the most visible manifestations of frustrated attempts by the Lebanese Shi'a to obtain recognition and rights within the state structure.

The first part of the paper considers the historical context of political mobilization and violence within the Shi'i community since the creation of the Lebanese state in 1920. The birth and acceleration of this violence are explained by demographic, sociological, economic, legal and constitutional, as well as strategic and military variables. The combination of these variables, the staggered nature of their respective evolutions, and their impact on the Shi'a explain why members of the community, and organizations acting in its name, resorted to certain types of political violence. Three phenomena in particular are especially significant. First, the Lebanese Shi'a, as a group, was transformed in the space of forty years from an underdeveloped and submissive group to a community capable of rapid economic mobility and social mobilization. Second, the transformation from social mobilization to political mobilization was blocked, however, in part because the Lebanese communitarian system is governed by a set of rigid rules. Consequently, the Shi'a saw their identity reinforced, their borders established, and their mobilization as a "community" strengthened. Third, by using to their own advantage the failure of a new consensus within the Shi'i community and the impossibility of expanded political participation, outside forces intervened and propelled the discourse and practices of the Shi'a towards conflict and violence.

The paper offers a description and analysis of the various acts of political violence in which the Shi'a were implicated from 1974 to the early 1990s. By dividing the acts into three categories - extra-institutional protest in the form of mass demonstrations and protests, revolutionary insurrection (armed struggle) and terrorism - it shows how successive frustrations led to the transition from one form of violence to another: from a violence that was mainly symbolic and verbal in nature to a physical violence committed by armed militia groups, even against civilians. The analysis emphasizes the role of violence in structuring the cohesion and dynamics of the Lebanese Shi'a as a social group.

The paper then considers the phenomenon of violence itself as a means of reviving the past of the Shi'i community and of mobilizing its members. It examines the socio-economic, psychological, military and security aspects of the militia phenomenon which "structured" Lebanese society at the local level during the worst years of war when state order had totally collapsed. To illustrate how collective beliefs and values were used within the Shi'i community, it examines religious discourse as a way of structuring and giving meaning to anti-state and anti-Western political violence. In particular, it analyses the annual *Ashûra* ritual, which evolved from a religious celebration into a political performance as a means of galvanizing collective mobilization.

The paper ends by looking at the recent evolution of the Shi'i movement during the period of reconstruction of the Lebanese state since the end of the war. It considers the choice faced by the Shi'i movement between compromise with the state including the accession to power, or refusal of the path of normalization through withdrawal into a society that at some future date could remobilize.

The study has been prepared within the framework of the UNRISD research programme on political violence and social movements, directed by David Apter. The author, Elizabeth Picard, is a researcher with the Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Internationales of the Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques in Paris. A specialist on the Arab world, she teaches at the Institut d'Etudes Politiques and at the Université de Paris IV. Her publications on the politics and societies of the Middle East include **Liban: Etat de discorde** (1988), **La question Kurde** (1991) and **La nouvelle donne au Moyen-Orient** (1993).

Dharam Ghai, Director
April 1993

Introduction

In the Middle East, indeed throughout the entire Arab-Muslim region stretching eastward from Morocco to the Gulf and from Caucasia down to Sudan, no country offers a better example of political violence than Lebanon. The only exception, it could be argued, is Iran. But the political violence in Iran, under Islamic rule since 1979, is quite specifically state-sponsored violence; whereas in Lebanon the example of the Shi'i community lends itself better to a general theoretical model of political violence. The Lebanese case seems to correspond even more precisely to such a model than a country such as Libya, with its role not only in the internal conflicts of neighbouring countries but in international terrorism as well. It seems to correspond to a model of political violence more precisely than Egypt or Syria, too. In the former country, the violent acts of Islamic militants - such as the assassination of Anwar el-Sadat - had long been a marginal phenomenon in a complex social order that was basically democratic, and in the latter, Islamic opposition forces led a violent civil war against the secularist military regime of Hafiz el-Assad between 1979 and 1982.

Indeed, the example of the Lebanese Shi'a offers a rich variety of characteristics and variables that enable us to construct a paradigm of political violence. Attempts to address political violence in the geo-politically important region of the Middle East have tended to approach the question from either a political economy perspective (though not strictly class-based) or a cultural perspective (though not exactly culturalist).[1] In this paper, we shall go beyond these two perspectives in order to penetrate the internal logic of the actors involved in emancipatory movements: in order to understand a community's moral project and its confrontation with the state, we must interpret tumultuous events in their historic and metaphoric dimensions. First, however, it is indispensable, albeit oversimplified, to examine the variables and circumstances that can help us understand why "men rebel".[2]

With this aim in mind, the first part of this paper will consider the historical context of political mobilization and violence within the Lebanese Shi'i community since the creation of the Lebanese state in 1920. We will also discuss the Shi'i community in the context of the ultra-liberal, pro-market economy of Lebanon - and particularly Beirut. Furthermore, the specific nature of the country's political system, social structures, and especially its rapid transformation since the Second World War will also be addressed. Regional conflicts - both the Arab-Israeli conflict and that between Israel and the Palestinians - have had tremendous repercussions within the Shi'i community, and will therefore also be considered. Finally, we will discuss the profound impact on the Shi'i community of the Iranian revolution. By doing so, we hope to provide an answer to the question "why" - and "why" only - behind the phenomenon of political violence.

The second part of this paper offers a description and analysis of the various acts of political violence in which the Shi'a have been implicated between 1974 (the year before the "official" outbreak of the Lebanese civil war) and the beginning of the 1990s. It focuses on three particular types of violent acts: first, extra-institutional protest (mass demonstrations and insurrections); second, revolutionary insurrection (armed struggle); and third, terrorist acts. In discussing these three types, we will consider how they are co-ordinated, how they can be scaled according to various stages, how they change

1 J. Leca, "L'économie contre la culture dans l'explication des dynamiques politiques", **Bulletin du CEDEJ**, N° 23, 1988.

2 T. Gurr, **Why men rebel**, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1970.

according to time and place, and the nature of possible inversion[3] as the actions evolve from one stage to another.

The third part of this paper focuses on violence as a means of actualizing the past of the community, and of mobilizing its members, on a new basis and within new boundaries. The interior dynamics of the Lebanese Shi'a as a community are examined. This approach, which can be called a "political culture" approach, serves to illustrate how political mobilization within the Shi'i community has in many ways been a mobilization of a collective repository of beliefs and values. Because this store of beliefs and values has been in a continual state of creation and recomposition, it must be examined in relation to the local culture.[4] The ethnic basis of this political culture can be described as "Arab Mediterranean". In the Arab Mediterranean societies often divided into clans or tribes, where action within a code of honor is central, violence can provide a structure. Violence functions as a sort of internal logic, even to the exclusion of social interaction. Our focus on the "militia" phenomenon - examined not only in its socio-economic dimensions but also in relation to military and security questions and to some extent individual and collective psychology - we hope will offer a contribution to the understanding of the specific form of political violence adopted by Lebanese communities in strife. In the Lebanese civil war, the militia groups, in their discourse and actions, were the chief users of violence. Their violence was directed not only at the state, but also aimed at deepening the segmentation of society and thus reinforcing the identity of the community group under their control.

The most important aspect of this political culture is the religious dimension - the topic of the fourth part of this paper - for it is essentially in this dimension that groups find the "mytho-logics" that structure their emancipatory discourse. After the decline of Marxist and nationalist ideologies - which had long been leading popular mobilization against external foreign domination - religious discourse appeared as a new means of popular mobilization and a new way of structuring and giving meaning to anti-state and anti-Western political violence. Despite its contradictions and weaknesses, religious discourse has become the foundation of a new Islamic political order, opposed to the international nation-state order. To analyse the process of popular mobilization, we shall specifically examine the annual *Ashûra* celebration, which for the Lebanese Shi'i community is a privileged moment of retrieval and projection. The *Ashûra* ritual, which serves as a *topos* for group fusion based on faith and an eschatological vision, has been turned into a political performance in which the community's founding traumas[5] are reversed in order to galvanize collective mobilization.

The fifth and final part of this paper concentrates on the recent evolution of the Shi'i emancipatory movement during reconstruction of the Lebanese state. Since 1991, the Lebanese state has been attempting to regain control over its territory and populations. Confronted with a new national and international environment, the Shi'i movement faces a choice between compromise with the state, which favors accession of part of the Shi'i community to the benefits of power exercised through clientelism, or refusing totally the path of normalization through withdrawal back into a society that, at some future date, could remobilize. The choice between marginalization and future remobilization will ultimately depend to a large extent on the ability of the state to propose solutions for many serious problems such as war, unemployment, underdevelopment, crime and emigration - the very problems that led to the creation of the Shi'i movement.

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3 M. Wieviorka, **Sociétés et terrorisme**, Fayard, Paris, 1988, Ch. VI "L'inversion".

4 C. Geertz, **The interpretation of cultures**, Basic Books, New York, 1973.

5 R. Girard, **La violence et le sacré**, Grasset, Paris, 1972.

Why the Lebanese Shi'a?

It is necessary to express a certain degree of caution at the outset, not so much because of doubts about the validity of our analyses or because we acknowledge the arrogance of pretending to draw conclusions about a social movement whose nature, organization, and objectives impose a certain degree of secrecy. Neither does the theme under discussion pose a semantic problem, even though some theoretical approaches insist that a very wide range of social acts, indeed virtually all social acts, are metaphorically[6] or literally violent[7] which would render the term "political violence" redundant. Nor is the problem the fact that violence is *always* a dialectical process to the point where it would be wrong-headed to oppose the idea of "state order" with "disorder" and revolutionary violence. The real question is the pertinence of our choice of object - the Lebanese Shi'a - with respect to the theme of political violence.

There could be some confusion, at once concrete and ideal, between the violence of the war in Lebanon, involving exterior forces, and the "civil" war, in which both sub- and trans-state actors fought against Lebanese state forces and against each other.[8] How, and to what extent, can we distinguish the events of the war from those which can be described as political violence? What logic and causality link these two phenomena? These questions are particularly crucial when one is examining the Lebanese Shi'i community, as it has been directly involved, for obvious geo-strategic reasons, in the violent confrontation with Israel. Contrary to the events in Italy in the 1970s or in Northern Ireland today, Lebanon - and especially southern Lebanon inhabited by the Shi'a - was drawn into an international conflict (since 1968, 1973, or 1975 depending on the source) that gave birth to an armed resistance which was "Lebanese" if not "national". Should violent actions, such as hostage-taking or bomb attacks, be considered "acts of war" (said to be committed in the name of a "struggle for liberation") or "acts of terrorism", the ultimate expression of political violence? In this paper, we will highlight various ambiguities and perversions, not only in acts undertaken, but also in the discourse that gives these acts meaning. One encounters, as we shall see, some difficulty when attempting to treat together the two adjoining questions of war and political violence, as each inevitably spills over into the other.

We must strongly reaffirm - contrary to the prejudices spread by Orientalists and supported by Islamists - that there is nothing intrinsic to the Lebanese Shi'i community (or to Muslims generally) that leads to the conclusion that this social group is inclined towards political violence. Historical, spatial and economic contexts, as well as the constant cultural changes within the Shi'i community itself, have created a great variety of experiences which preclude any fixed or immutable definition of the Shi'a. Moreover, studies of other ethnic and religious groups in the region,[9] as well as our own study of the mobilization of the Maronites by the Lebanese Forces militia within the context of the Lebanese war, suggest that analysis requires an examination of elements in the social structures and common cultural codes of Middle Eastern groups, notably in Lebanon, whatever the various manifestations of meaning in different religious discourse. In other

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6 P.Bourdieu, **Le sens pratique**, Editions de Minuit, Paris, 1980, p. 217.

7 J. Galtung, "A structural theory of aggression", in I. Feierabend and R. Feierabend (eds.), **Anger, violence and politics: Theories and research**, Prentice Hall, New York, 1972, p. 85.

8 D. Riches (ed.), **The anthropology of violence**, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1986. In his introduction, Riches makes a distinction between *polemos*, a war led in order to dominate the structure of control in a state society, and *statis*, violence led in order to defend the moral or physical integrity of the group, especially in segmented societies.

9 E. Sivan and M. Friedman, **Religious radicalism and politics in the Middle East**, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1990.

words, in examining the "political violence" of the Lebanese Maronites, for example, one should question the role of Christianism - specifically Maronitism - in the structuring and expression of this violence. A comparative study of Lebanon and Northern Ireland, conducted between 1990 and 1992 as part of a workshop on "political identities",[10] demonstrated the instrumentalization of violence both outside of and within each group in the invention of its identity and in its mobilization, whatever the religious code used by the "entrepreneurs" of violence. In order to enrich our reflections in this paper, we will similarly attempt, whenever possible, to introduce elements of comparison between the Lebanese Shi'a and other emancipatory movements in Lebanon and in other parts of the world.

Violence as a Political Means

Irrespective of theoretical approach (political economy or culturalist), cultural origin, political beliefs, or personal distance with respect to the Lebanese Shi'a, there is the uninamously held view,[11] even among those whose position is not neutral, that the violence committed within the Shi'i community itself or outside the community, nationally and internationally, is mainly a *reactive* form of violence. The birth and acceleration of this violence can, to be sure, be explained by demographic, sociological, economic, legal and constitutional, as well as strategic and military variables. The combination of these variables, the staggered nature of their respective evolutions, and their impact on the Shi'a explain why members of the community, and organizations acting in its name, resorted to certain types of political violence. Three phenomena in particular are especially significant. First, the Lebanese Shi'a, as a group, was transformed in the space of forty years from an underdeveloped and submissive group to a community capable of rapid economic mobility and social mobilization. Second, because the Lebanese communitarian system is governed by a set of rigid rules, there was not continuity in the Shi'i transition from *social* mobilization to *political* mobilization. Consequently, the Shi'a saw their identity reinforced, their borders established, and their mobilization as a "community" strengthened. Third, by using to their own advantage the failure of a new consensus within the Shi'i community and the impossibility of expanded political participation, outside forces - not only armed but "arming" - intervened and propelled the discourse and practices of the Shi'a towards conflict and violence.

Economic transformation and relative deprivation

In order to highlight the importance of the socio-economic causes of political violence, it might be useful at this point to sketch a brief historical and geographic portrait of the Lebanese Shi'a.[12] Since the early centuries of Islam, the Shi'a have been settled in the area which would become Lebanon. Successive waves of invasions, dominations, and massive migrations, some resulting in bloody massacres,[13] forced them to relocate on numerous occasions, shrinking their original Shi'i territory as they retreated into fortified,

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[10] **Milices libanaises et para-militaires nord-irlandais: De la mobilisation du groupe à la construction de son identité**, a paper presented at the Colloquium on Political Identities, Centre d'Etudes et de Recherches Internationales, Paris, March 1992.

[11] M. Amil (Hasan Hamdan), **Al-Nazâriyya fîl-mumârasa l-siyâsiya**, Dar al-Farâbî, Beirut, 1979. See also M. Chiha (one of the best known theoreticians of the "Phoenician identity"), **Politique intérieure**, Le Trident, Beirut, 1964.

[12] The dogmatic and ritualistic content of Shi'ism will be dealt with later on.

[13] Especially the "devastation of Kisrawân" in the fourteenth century, whose main victims were the Shi'a. See A. Beydoun, "Les morts du Kisrawân", **Identité confessionnelle et temps social chez les historiens libanais contemporains**, Librairie orientale, Beirut, 1984, p. 102.

defensive positions until the middle of the nineteenth century.[14] When the state of Lebanon was born in 1920, only a small group of Shi'a were present on Mount Lebanon, in the high mountainous area overlooking the port of Jbayl (Byblos). The vast majority of Shi'a were spread out over two regions: either the Jabal Amil between the Zahrani River to the north, Mount Hermon to the east, the Houleh valley (in Palestine, later Israel) to the south and the Mediterranean to the west; or in Hermel and the Biqa' valley near Baalbak, between Mount Lebanon to the west and Mount Anti-Lebanon to the east. Not only were these two regions geographically peripheral, but neither had ever belonged to the autonomous Mount Lebanon as defined by its 1861 borders. The two regions were attached to Mount Lebanon by authorities under the French mandate, and in the process Baalbak and Hermel were detached from the prefecture of Damascus. In Jabal Amil and the northeastern region of Baalbak-Hermel, the Shi'i population supported the Arab nationalist movement and the independent Arab government of Damascus (October 1918-July 1920). The French conquest of these peripheral areas lasted until 1926. During this period, the Shi'i populations formed into armed bands - the *'isâbât* -, led revolts against the occupying forces and mounted attacks on neighbouring Christian villages.[15] The Christians were viewed as secular competitors of the Shi'a and, moreover, were quite favorable to the French presence in the area.

In truth, for a long time, the French "occupation" was so incomplete that, when the first official census was taken in Lebanon in 1932, it neglected a number of settlements in the two majority Shi'i regions.[16] At the time of independence in 1943, several thousand Shi'a in the Baalbak-Hermel region were still not registered as Lebanese, and what's more many remain unregistered even today. This is largely due to their nomadic way of life as shepherds, sometimes following their flocks outside the country for several months of the year. The Shi'a of Jabal Amil, on the contrary, felt their Lebanese identity reinforced since May 1948, when the creation of the state of Israel traced the border of South Lebanon.

The term "underdeveloped" is particularly apt to describe the situation of the Shi'a in these two regions. Prosperity in Lebanon - which should not be confused with development - was based chiefly on trade and financial activities in Beirut. This was not the result of chance, but rather of a well-planned strategy of the combined interests of French entrepreneurs and Lebanese merchants, the so-called "new Phoenicians".[17] Beirut's subsequent economic boom was spurred chiefly by three favorable circumstances: the closing in 1948 of the port of Haifa to Arab markets; the emergence in Syria of authoritarian nationalist regimes; and lastly, the dramatic increase in oil revenues on the Arab peninsula. Not only did Beirut, the "oversized" capital city of a small country, lure capital and wealth but at the same time the city was attracting considerable human migrations from the peripheral regions.[18] The resulting disequilibrium between the capital and the rest of the country was so marked that, in the first years after independence, Beirut alone was producing two thirds of the national revenue, of which 70

[14] D. Chevallier, **La société du Mont Liban à l'époque de la révolution industrielle en Europe**, Geuthner, Paris, 1971, p. 91.

[15] M. Jaber, **Pouvoir et société au Jabal Amel de 1749 à 1920 dans la conscience des chroniques chiites et dans un essai d'interprétation**, Thèse (mimeo), Université de Paris IV, 1978.

[16] According to the census of 1932, there were 155,000 Shi'a in Lebanon, that is, 19.6 per cent of its population. See P. Rondot, **Les institutions politiques du Liban, des communautés traditionnelles à l'Etat moderne**, Institut d'études de l'Orient contemporain, Paris, 1947, pp. 28-29.

[17] C. Gates, **The historical role of political economy in the development of modern Lebanon**, Centre for Lebanese Studies, Oxford, forthcoming.

[18] A. Kher, "Polarisation au Liban", **Développement et civilisation**, N° 5, 1961, p. 52.

per cent came from banks and services and 15 per cent from industry.[19] In the decade from 1960 to 1970, Beirut showed all the exterior signs of a wealthy modern metropolis whose high standard of living, consumerist culture, and Western values sharply contrasted with the backward way of life in rural Lebanon, to say nothing of the surrounding Arab countries.

Poverty was widespread in the rural areas, where about 85 per cent of the Shi'a[20] lived. Though 45 per cent of the Lebanese population depended on agriculture, this activity produced only 15 per cent of the country's revenues.[21] Most of the Shi'a were cultivating soil that was rapidly losing its fertility, while water resources (the Orontes and the Litani) were under-utilized. Unlike the Maronite and Druze areas of Mount Lebanon, where a shift was made towards a one-crop export economy in the nineteenth century, in the Shi'i areas no such integration into a capitalist economy was made and no peasant uprisings took place. In the regions of Baalbak-Hermel and Jabal Amil, the traditional social and agrarian structures remained locked in place. For a whole century, large tracts of arable land remained in the hands of influential city merchants - the 'Usayrans from Sidon, the Khalils from Tyre, the Zayns from Nabatiyyah - and powerful tribes such as the As'ads from Tayyaba, the Husaynis and the Hamadas from Baalbak, who had prospered as tax agents working on behalf of the Ottoman ruler.[22]

The general economic climate for the Shi'a was, in a word, disastrous. Their standard of living was well below that of inhabitants of Beirut - in the 1950s, it was five times lower according to one Lebanese sociologist[23] - and there was very little in the way of economic and social infrastructure. According to a study by IRFED[24], the Baalbak-Hermel and Jabal Amil regions were both badly in need of communication, medical, and education facilities. When political violence first broke out in 1975, some pointed to the city/country, wealthy/poor, and landowner/tenant farmer contrasts, especially in the context of religious and class-struggle tensions, largely between middle-class Christian groups and under-privileged Muslim groups. In particular, the concept of "class community"[25] was applied to the Shi'a. This interpretation, which was widely accepted during the 1970s,[26] was based on one undeniable fact: by most measures of socio-economic status, the Shi'a fared poorly in comparison with the non-Shi'a.[27] But reality was in fact much more complex. Several other social groups in Lebanon, including the

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19 C. Dubar and S. Nasr, **Les classes sociales au Liban**, Presses de la FNSP, Paris, 1976. See p. 54 for the year 1949.

20 S. Nasr, "La transition des Chiites vers Beyrouth: Mutations sociales et mobilisation communautaire à la veille de 1975", in CERMOC (ed.), **Mouvements communautaires et espaces urbains au Machreq**, CERMOC, Beyrouth, 1985, pp. 85-116. The Shi'a accounted for 70-85 per cent of the residents in Jabal Amil and Baalbak-Hermel, and only 3.5 per cent of the population of Beirut in 1948.

21 A. Kher, *op. cit.*

22 A.R. Norton, **Amal and the Shi'a: Struggle for the soul of Lebanon**, Texas University Press, Austin, 1987, p. 15.

23 A. Khalîl, "Junûb Lubnân bayna l-dawla wal-thawra", **Dirâsât 'arabiyya** N° 4, 1975, pp. 53-75.

24 Institut de recherche et de formation en vue du développement (IRFED), **Besoins et possibilités de développement au Liban**, Beirut, 1960.

25 Under the influence of Muhsin Ibrahim, the General Secretary of the Organization for Communist Action in Lebanon (OACL). See E. Picard, "Political identities and communal identities: Shifting mobilization among the Lebanese Shi'a through ten years of war", in D. Ronen and D. Thompson (eds.), **Ethnicity, politics and development**, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, 1986.

26 G. Twaynî, "The Shi'a are the proletarians of the earth, apparently the most submissive class, but the most revolutionary at the bottom", **al-Nahâr**, 18 March 1974, p. 1.

27 J. Chamié, "Lebanese civil war: An investigation into the causes", **World Affairs** N° 113, 1977, p. 179. M. Hudson, **The precarious republic: Political modernization in Lebanon**, Random House, New York, 1968, p. 79. G. Haddad, "Primum vivere", **L'Orient-le Jour**, 15 July 1975, p. 1.

Maronites, had undergone painful economic mutations that had led to social transformations[28] and consequently to eruptions of violence. It is important, therefore, that the actual situation not be analysed as a static opposition, but as a dynamic interaction.

From deprivation to dispossession

The process of mobilization within the Shi'i community was the result of two external factors, one positive and the other negative. The positive factor was the improvements brought by the Shihabist regime, and the negative factor was the upheaval in the social structures of the Shi'i community caused by merchant capitalism. Still, other phenomena, intrinsic to the Shi'a themselves, must not be overlooked: their pattern of migration within and outside of the country, their cultural dynamics, and their class mobility.

The Lebanese government had become aware of the regional inequalities after the 1958 crisis,[29] despite the fact that the Shi'i populations of Baalbak-Hermel and Jabal Amil had barely taken part. Under the presidency of the reformist General Fuad Shihab (1958-64), a number of institutions such as the Social Development Agency and the "Green Plan" attempted to deal with social and economic underdevelopment. Within a decade, roads were built and electrical-power stations were constructed in the most remote areas, especially in South Lebanon and in the Biqa'. For the first time, people were able easily to access the capital city by road, and the products and symbols of Beirut's urban prosperity were disseminated throughout Lebanon's rural areas. Rural populations also benefited from new educational facilities, which for more than a half century had been the exclusive privilege of the Mount Lebanon area, where instruction was undertaken by Christian religious orders. Between 1958 and 1971, the number of Lebanese children in school almost quadrupled.[30] The Lebanese University, public and free, began admitting larger numbers of young Shi'a, who would form a new middle-class network ready to spearhead social and political mobilization. Also, the state increased its hiring of Shi'a, who until then had been under-represented in the civil service,[31] the army, and the security forces. Partly as a result of this closer contact with the centre, this dozen-year period was a time of major upheaval in the traditional life, culture and values of the rural Shi'i areas.

This policy of state outreach initiated by General Shihab did not go without unforeseen side-effects, however. In the peripheral areas dominated by private landowners whose tracts of land took in several villages, the introduction of an export-based agro-capitalism[32] had an incalculable impact on the traditional social and agricultural production systems of the Shi'i peasants, virtually wiping out the tenant-farmer system. Also, industrialized agriculture - chiefly in tobacco and beets - caused serious unemployment due to mechanization and the concentration of ownership in the hands of

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28 G. Corm, **Géopolitique du conflit libanais**, La Découverte, Paris, 1986. Especially "L'affaiblissement de la communauté maronite", pp. 172-174.

29 The crisis of 1958, as a mixture of Christian/Muslim and pro-Western/Arabist antagonism, was a harbinger of the 1975 civil war.

30 According to a survey made by the Family Planning Association in 1971, 31 per cent of the men and 70 per cent of the women were illiterate among the Shi'a, compared to 13 per cent and 20 per cent respectively among the Greek Orthodox population. **Les fiches du monde arabe** N° I-L17a, Nicosia, 1980.

31 General Shihab imposed a quota of 50 per cent for Muslims in the civil service. While this measure aimed at balancing communal representation, it played against individual competences. Nonetheless, it was often difficult to find first-rate civil servants among the Shi'a.

32 The part of agriculture fell to 8 per cent of GDP in the early 1970s. See Lebanese Communist Party, **Al-qadhiyya l-zirâ'iyya fî Lubnân**, Beirut, 1973, pp. 108-109.

large commercial cartels. The result was all the more disastrous as the Baalbak-Hermel and Jabal Amil regions could not offer alternative economic activities. The only choice left for many was to migrate. Thus, in 1973, only 40 per cent of the Lebanese Shi'is in the two regions remained there. Some 50 per cent had moved to Beirut and its suburbs,[33] where they already made up 29 per cent of the population.[34]

Within a single generation, several hundred thousand Shi'a had flooded into the Beirut area. While a small minority joined Beirut's salaried middle-class, the vast majority settled into shantytowns and abandoned buildings on the city's edge, notably the north suburb of Nab'a and the south suburbs of Ghobayri and Borj el-Barajnah. This strip of humanity - known as the "misery belt" - soon came into conflict with Palestinian and Syrian immigrants as unskilled workers from these communities competed for jobs in export industries on the outskirts of Beirut. Many also depended on seasonal work and minor service-industry jobs: porters, dockers, peddlers, and fruit salesmen. These workers formed an economic under-class, or a sort of quasi-proletariat in the late 1960s, when the Lebanese economy was flourishing. At the same time, the rapid growth of service industries did not keep pace with the sharp decline of agriculture, leading to increasing unemployment - 10 per cent in 1970, 15 per cent in 1975. In the end, instead of adapting to the commercially-oriented urban life of Beirut, most of new Shi'i migrants felt that their identity was threatened. They clung to their traditional ways once settled around Beirut, and indeed contributed to the "ruralization" of the city. Though transplanted, they managed to maintain strong links with their places of origin, which in most cases were never farther away than 100 kilometers or so. Family links were reinforced, including strict control over women,[35] and abandoned religious practices were embraced again in order to reaffirm the Shi'i collective identity.[36]

At the outset of the 1970s, the Shi'a from northeastern and southern Lebanon showed all the signs of readiness for social mobilization. Large masses of them were displaced and poverty-stricken. Their contact with other, more prosperous, segments of Lebanese society made their unfavourable situation, and their lack of social mobility, all the more painfully obvious. Indeed, the contact between the Shi'a and other segments of the Lebanese society did not result in a process of assimilation, but on the contrary one of rejection. Some observers have described the situation of the uprooted Shi'a at this time as "revolutionary". The IRFED report, for example, was prescient when it noted that "the continuing acculturation of the Shi'a will not take long to make obvious the increasingly wide lifestyle disparities, which in turn will pave the way for regional revolts, anarchist social agitation by some groups, and the intervention by other groups in neighbouring areas".[37] This recipe for violence was even more potent because of the growing tension between the traditional Shi'i elite that had long controlled local villages and the community's new, educated elite centered in Beirut. Among the latter, there was a feeling of global dispossession when confronted with the modernity of Beirut, and a particular readiness to take their protest to the *political* arena.

Shi'i emigration towards West Africa, which had begun under the French Mandate, began rapidly to increase during the 1960s. This movement later increased further due to the

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33 Y. Schemeil, **Sociologie du système politique libanais**, Université des sciences sociales, Grenoble, 1976, p. 71.

34 A. Faour, "Migration from South Lebanon with a field study of forced mass migration", **ECWA population bulletin** N° 21, 1981.

35 Everywhere in the Muslim world, city women are more often veiled than are country women.

36 F. Khuri, **From village to suburb: Order and change in greater Beirut**, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1975.

37 *ibid*.

attraction of the oil boom in countries such as Libya and Kuwait, and in the Gulf in general. But that was only temporary emigration, and even those Shi'a who had emigrated maintained close links with their home country. Many, pursuing individual strategies, chose to reinvest their earnings and know-how in Lebanon, which partly explains the emergence of Shi'i banks and a new class of Shi'i doctors, lawyers and engineers in cities such as Beirut and Sidon. They also brought back home foreign political practices and political ambitions, and entered the 1968 and 1972 elections for Parliament.[38] However, once back in Lebanon, the young generation of educated Shi'a soon discovered that the main criterion for social promotion in Lebanon was community-based, and that Lebanon's social networks were still controlled by the powerful landowning class that had entered into Beirut's commercial and financial elite. The Lebanese institutional system came into question.

Communalism against democracy

These economic and social transformations were certainly not unique to the Shi'i community. Indeed, other rural groups, such as the Maronites, underwent the same turbulence due to rapid economic modernization and urbanization. It could therefore be thought - and we will return to this point when discussing the various forms of political mobilization - that the tensions could have been resolved through "civil" forms of social actions, such as demonstrations, union negotiations, and national political battles, as one observes in other societies. But in Lebanon, the recourse to political violence was the result of a *blockage*, that is to say an incapacity on the part of the political process to deal with social demands.

This could seem peculiar indeed when one considers that the Lebanese political system was founded upon equilibrium and consensus. The equilibrium was established among the different regional and cultural groups in the country. In keeping with the Ottoman system which guaranteed the autonomy and political representation of each *millet* (religious community), the constitutional unity of the various social groups in Lebanon was built on their religious differences. Thus the Electoral Law of 1926 established Parliamentary representation based on sectarian criteria, calculated *pro rata* according to the demographic weight of each of the 15, and later 17, communities in the country. The problem with this communitarian representation is that it lacked flexibility, as its numerical calculations were based on the long-outdated census of 1932.[39] Not only, as has already been pointed out, had the 1932 census neglected to take into account peripheral populations, in particular among the Shi'a, but subsequent differences in birth rates[40] meant that by the 1970s it was generally acknowledged that the Shi'a population

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[38] A. Hourani and N. Shehadi (eds.), **The Lebanese in the world: A century of emigration**, I.B. Tauris, London, 1991.

[39] P. Rondot, *op. cit.* Until the Taif Accord of 1989 and the Second Republic, this proportion was strictly respected. See E. Picard, **Liban, état de discorde**, Flammarion, Paris, 1988.

Community	% in the 1932 Census
Maronites	28
Sunnis	22
Shi'is	20
Orthodox	10
Other Christians	12
Druze	7
Alawis	1

[40] According to the survey quoted in note 30, Shi'i women have 58 per cent more children than Christian women, for reasons linked to social and economic conditions as well as to educational and professional facilities for women.

had substantially increased.[41] In a proportional electoral system still based on the 1932 census, the Shi'a were consistently under-represented in Parliament and, consequently, in the government. Their under-representation went beyond the political sphere to include the civil service, the army command, and even private enterprise and the banking system.

As a response to this problem, both the Constitution of 1926 and the Taif Constitutional Accord promise, in principle, the abandonment of the community-based system in favor of a majority system.[42] But to go from intentions to actions is often difficult and filled with risks. It is far from certain, as observers of the Lebanese political system have rightly pointed out,[43] that adoption of the demographic majority principle would lead the Lebanese polity to democratic practices and not instead to a (possibly religious-based) dictatorship of the majority. Thus, while waiting for a secular regime respecting the principle of "one man, one vote", political representation and power-sharing continue, after fifteen years of war and the Taif Accord, to be based on the principle of inter-community consensus[44] on important national issues, above all the free-market economic system and the preservation of the Christian dimension of Lebanese political life.[45]

This principle proved remarkably resistant to change because it reflected the profound and lasting agreement among the conservative elites of *all* the Lebanese communities - including the Shi'i elites - on the question of shared power and wealth. Indeed, contrary to the image of the Shi'i community as the victim of the other Lebanese communities, in truth it was always divided and the Shi'i elites took full advantage of the community-based system and were reluctant to make social demands in Parliament on behalf of the groups they claim to represent. The main Shi'i leaders, members of six important landowning families, augmented their economic power through other forms of legitimacy: either tribal, or inherited from the Ottoman empire with a *bey* title, or through membership in the *sayyid*s - the descendants of the family of the Prophet. Apart from collusion among elites, these families used an uncommon form of corruption[46] to control entry into Parliament and thus assured the exclusivity of access to the state through clientelist relations.[47] Whatever the nature of social change and popular pressure, this well-oiled system of political control tended to work without a hitch, especially in the elections of 1964, 1968 and 1972.

The 1974 by-election for the Shi'i seat of Nabatiyyah, in which the engineer and *Amal* loyalist Rafiq Shahin defeated a member of the powerful As'ad family, was a watershed event in Lebanese politics. In one sense, it was only a symbolic victory, a sign of the social evolution that allowed new elites to take advantage of the various educational,

41 The controversy about the figures is very heated, reflecting the political stakes. Y. Courbage and Ph. Fargues, **La situation démographique au Liban**, Editions libanaises, Beirut, 1974, put the Shi'a at 27 per cent of the total Lebanese population; the Supreme Islamic Shi'i Council (SISC) put them at 32 per cent (February 1976), and the (Christian) Lebanese Front placed it at 20 per cent, according to **Les fiches du monde arabe** N°I-L17 , *op. cit.*

42 The Constitution of 1926 stipulates (Article 95) that the community allotment is adopted on a provisional basis. The Taif Accord of 1989 states (I-1-G) that the abolition of political communalism is "an essential national objective."

43 T. Hanf and A. Messara are the leaders of this analysis which favours *consociatio*. See T. Hanf et al., **La société de concordance: Approche comparative**, Université libanaise, Beirut, 1986.

44 Though on an equal basis between Christian and Muslim representation in Parliament. J. Maïla, " Le document d'entente nationale: Un commentaire", **Les cahiers de l'Orient** N° 16-17 , 1989-1990.

45 The government agreement known as the National Pact was adopted at the time of independence (1943) by the Maronite President and the Sunni Prime Minister. It stressed symmetrical independence with respect to the surrounding Arab world and Western influence.

46 F. Ajami, **The vanished imam**, I.B. Tauris, London, 1986, pp. 63-72.

47 S. Khalaf, **Lebanon's predicament**, Columbia University Press, New York, 1987, pp. 126-135.

migration and agricultural opportunities made possible by the failure of high-status families to adapt to changing social, economic and political circumstances.[48] However, the 1974 by-election was a detonator for the political violence that would soon erupt: after their defeat, the traditional elites evidently resolved themselves, implicitly or explicitly, to block all further social change. This was accomplished by shifting their rivalry with the new elites, and the masses they claimed to represent, from the political arena to the battlefield of armed struggle. Their refusal to accept domination spawned violence. In Lebanon, this reaction of the conservative elites, who dominated the state apparatus, seems to have been decisive in the transition from political conflict to revolutionary insurrection.

The role of imported violence

The 1974 by-election was the last example of non-violent political transformation in Lebanon. After 1974, armed groups burst into the country's over-heated and fragile political arena, creating a climate of insecurity and illegality which was only exacerbated by the weakness, and then the utter collapse, of the regular Lebanese army. It is not sufficient, when dealing with the question of imported violence, to stress only the frequent attacks and occupations by foreign forces, even though these forces were responsible for most of the death and destruction during the fifteen years of war. To be sure, the Palestine Liberation Organization first sparked the war in southern Lebanon; Syria bombarded Beirut in 1978 and in 1989-90; Israel invaded Lebanon in 1978 and 1982; and the Iranian *Pasdaran* (Guardians of the Revolution) were responsible for a series of attacks and hostage-takings in 1983-1989. But beyond their direct actions, these regional actors, as well as others outside the Middle East, promoted their own geo-strategic objectives through the intermediary of conflicting Lebanese groups, whom they armed and then incited to rise up in armed struggle.

One of the paradoxes of Lebanon's civil violence during the 1970s and 1980s was that the discourse of *all* the Lebanese groups squarely laid the blame for internal dissension on foreign elements: either the *ajnab* - the West, and particularly Israel - or the *gharîb*, [49] all those who do not share Lebanese bloodlines or do not come from inside the region. Not only was the notion of *gharîb* instrumental in de-emphasizing the internal cleavages in Lebanese society, but it also stirred up local passions against non-Lebanese and protracted the life of an indecisive political system that was mainly threatened by its own internal divisions. The belief in a foreign "plot" (American, Syrian, Saudi, etc.)[50] thus allowed the Lebanese to forge some semblance of a "national" consensus. Seeking to avoid mutual accusations and self-criticism, the Lebanese preferred to deny the existence of an internal dimension to the violence in their country. In doing so, they were rendered incapable of understanding the real causes and function of this violence - which of course meant that they had difficulty finding a remedy.

Without losing sight of the regional and international dimensions of the war in Lebanon, what must be underscored is not so much the phenomenon of foreign interference itself, but rather the juncture between international conflict and internal violence in its different dimensions. After 1975, it became difficult to distinguish, concretely and analytically, self-defensive violence, deliberate political violence, and violence resulting from international conflicts. For at this stage of the Lebanese crisis, external and internal

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[48] E.L. Peters, "Shifts of power in a Lebanese village", in R. Antoun and I. Harik (eds.), **Rural politics and social change in the Middle East**, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1972.

[49] M. Abou Chedid Nasr, "Le gharîb (étranger) ou la difficulté d'être dans le discours libanais sur la guerre civile", **Mots** N° 17, 1988.

[50] The plot theory was very fashionable among Lebanese intellectuals. See G. Tuéni, **Une guerre pour les autres**, Lattès, Paris, 1985.

violence became inter-active. This was partly because arms supplies, whether sold or given outright, were falling into the hands of various Lebanese factions; and then, later, because foreign governments were working out common strategies with these Lebanese factions. These joint strategies had the effect of pitting Lebanese groups against one another, and always to the benefit of the foreign state behind the interference.[51] Above all, the intervention of foreign states in the Lebanese conflict had the effect of dramatically increasing the numbers involved in the conflict, improving their level of military training, and augmenting the firepower of their ammunition. Indeed, at this point the very nature of the Lebanese conflict was changed due to a break from traditional codes of civil violence. Respect of the dichotomy between public and private, for example, was violated when women joined the conflict and civilians were among the victims. Temporal notions, too, were shattered with the constant violation of truces. And finally, the notion of territorial security was destroyed as the war became offensive instead of defensive.[52]

From Protest to Revolution

The spectacular and widely viewed images of Shi'i political violence - of blown-up cars and the rash of abductions of Western citizens - should not divert our attention from the most common aspects of the Shi'i violence that started in the 1970s. The problem of terrorism, as we earlier noted, will be dealt with in the final part of this paper. We must first attempt to trace and understand the transition from one form of violence to another: from a violence that was mainly symbolic and verbal in nature to a physical violence committed by armed militiamen, even against civilians.

At each phase of this transformation, an understanding of the role of the state - whether as an active interlocutor or as an "absent" actor - is crucial to an understanding of the grammar of violence used by the emancipatory movement. The violent exchanges between the Shi'i movement and the state can best be understood by first reminding ourselves that this violence spared no religious group. Throughout the war and as the state gradually collapsed, other groups followed a course virtually parallel to that of the Shi'a. The Maronites of central Lebanon, for example, first switched from the political maneuvering of the Lebanese Front (1975) to the armed struggle led by the Lebanese Forces (1978), and then later were engaged in the inter-community war waged by General Michel Aoun against Samir Ja'ja' (1989).

We must also keep in mind the role of the population itself, as a suffering and often passive actor of the war. It has been estimated that fully 90 per cent of the Lebanese population remained outside of the armed struggle during the war. This figure should help put into relative perspective the common perceptions of war-torn Lebanon, where in fact a visiting observer would have difficulty reconciling the images of violence and destruction with the fact that daily life continued, that school children took exams, that buildings were constructed, that people went to the theater, that families spent the summer at the beach. While, in the successive stages of violence, the population furnished a reservoir for partisan mobilization, at the same time it constituted a force of civil resistance to the domination of the leaders promoting political violence.

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51 E. Picard, "La politique de la Syrie au Liban: Les développements incontrôlables d'une stratégie ambitieuse", **Maghreb-Machrek** N° 116, 1987.

52 O. Roy, **Afghanistan: La guerre comme facteur du passage au politique**, paper presented at the Congress of the Association Française de Science Politique, Bordeaux, October 1988.

In examining the patterns unique to the mobilization of the Shi'i movement during these successive phases, it must be said that a significant part of the population, albeit decreasing over time, remained loyal to traditional leaders. Also, a minority was mobilized by secular political movements such as the Ba'th pan-Arab party, the Social Syrian Nationalist party, the Lebanese Communist party, or the Communist Action Organization. This was true mainly for the first few years of the crisis, for the subsequent mounting of tensions, combined with the delegitimation of the Marxist model, provoked a gradual retreat back into community identities. As the war developed, the idea of "Shi'i mobilization" and "Shi'i violence" bore increasing resemblance to reality. It must not be forgotten, however, that there was also "Druze violence", "Maronite violence", and others as well, all reinforcing one another.

A search for radical change in a traditional way

The mobilization of the Shi'i community began several years before the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war, which is why it can be counted among the causes of the hostilities. The mobilization took the form of an extra-institutional protest against the Lebanese socio-political system through mass demonstrations and calls for radical reforms. For the first time in modern history, the Shi'i masses were pursuing their own autonomous strategy, but they were hardly a major political force, and even less a social movement. Contrary to leftist groups occupying the same political turf, the Shi'i movement was not an attempt by intellectuals to mobilize the grassroots, but rather an almost spontaneously formed movement of uprooted and impoverished Shi'i peasants, in the South or resettled in the Beirut suburbs. From the beginning, violence had been channeled through verbal discourse and other forms of political theater, which eventually degenerated into more direct confrontations. During mass demonstrations, barricades set up by police failed to prevent the outbreak of clashes with security forces. On several occasions, demonstrators occupied public buildings, notably the prefectures of Marjayoun (South Lebanon) and Baalbak. Numerous petitions decrying the high cost of living and growing insecurity were fired off to the Parliament. During strikes and protest marches in southern Lebanon, as well as in the industrial suburbs of Beirut, workers held aloft huge black and green flags (black being the emblematic color of Shi'ism, green of Islam). In the pre-war period, however, the movement was still open to inter-community co-operation as well as to the influence of leftist parties. The strikes won the support of the General Council of Labor (UGTL), the country's central, inter-community trade union. Student and Palestinian organizations, too, soon joined the protest movement, calling for an armed struggle against Israel.

The first general Shi'i strike took place in the spring of 1970, just after a devastating Israeli bomb attack aimed at Palestinian *fidayin* who had set up their armed base among the villages of Jabal Amil. The strike, observed throughout southern Lebanon and the Shi'a-inhabited suburbs of Beirut (Shiyah, Ghobairy, and Borj al-Barajnah to the south; Nab'a and Borj Hammoud to the east), was called by the Supreme Islamic Shi'i Council.[53] Tens of thousands marched in front of the SISC seat in Hazmiyeh, near Beirut. The SISC president, religious leader Musa Sadr[54], threatened to send dozens of homeless from the south to occupy empty buildings or "palaces", as he called them in the capital. The government took the threats and concrete demands seriously enough to set up, a few weeks later, a Council of the South, responsible for supporting development projects in

[53] The SISC,was created by Law 72/67 (1967), recognizes the Shi'i community in Lebanon as distinct from the Sunni. The SISC is the state's interlocutor for the community and exerts moral and legal authority on its members.

[54] An Iranian of Lebanese descent, Musa Sadr became a *mujtahid,* a doctor in theology and law, after studying in Teheran, Najaf (Iraq) and Qom (Iran). He became *mufti* of Tyre in 1959 and was granted Lebanese nationality in 1961. He was elected president of the SISC for life in 1969.

the region. But it was too little, too late. The area's economic and security crisis was too serious for such a "last-minute" remedy.

In March 1973, tobacco planters, protesting the unfair system of reaping their harvest, staged a sit-in in Nabatiyyah, the largest Shi'i city in Jabal Amil. Called both by the SISC and left-wing political parties, the sit-in degenerated into a violent clash with local security forces, leaving three tobacco planters dead. Mobilization efforts subsequently took a new turn when, in June 1973, Musa Sadr decided to give the movement a permanent structure and began organizing a series of mass rallies that drew tens of thousands of Shi'i men, many of whom were armed, to the country's main Shi'i towns in Yatir in February 1974, Baalbak in March, Bidnayil in May, and Tyre in June of the same year. The "Shi'i movement" was officially born during one of these meetings and baptised *Harakat al-mahrûmîn,* or the "Movement of the Deprived". In a society segmented into different communitarian identities, the new-born Shi'i movement was, in the early stages, careful to appear as a patriotic and not a strictly ethnic organization. That can be explained in part by the fact that the movement was in competition with secular leftist parties. But more importantly, the movement's patriotic aspect was necessary as its political demands were for reduced inequalities, a more equitable sharing of wealth, and readier access to participation in the government of a country enjoying rapid growth. Thus, the movement was open to the disenfranchised of all the Lebanese communities. The movement's founder, Musa Sadr, even undertook several co-operative charity efforts with Beirut's Greek Catholic bishop, Monsignor Gregoire Haddad. At the same time, the movement was loyal to the Lebanese National Movement, the coalition of leftist, pro-Palestinian parties led by Kamal Jumblatt.

The inter-community co-operation of the Movement of the Deprived soon began to show its limitations. Threatened by mobilized union members and by the class struggle led by leftist parties, the ruling elites actively sought to maintain the existing community-based cleavages in the political system through patronage networks. Consequently, the movement took on a strictly community-based character under the aegis of the SISC, and specifically Musa Sadr himself. In 1974, he quickly gathered several tens of thousands of supporters - as many as 100,000 in Tyre alone, according to press reports - and his candidate in the by-election that year won twice as many votes as his main conservative rival.

Although violent demonstrations also took place in the eastern part of the country, in the town of Baalbak as well as in Beirut suburbs, the focus of Shi'i mobilization efforts remained the South, where levels of human misery were in stark contrast to the opulence of the city-state. This impoverished area was the chief victim of the war while, at the same time, the rest of Lebanon lived in peace, away from the cross-fire in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The South was also excluded from the power structure built on a compromise between Maronites and Sunnis. Thus, the choice of the South for political recruitment can be seen as part of the strategy of the Movement of the Deprived to make inroads into the countryside in order to create a new political space in which populations in the outer regions could participate. As opposed to the "modern" political practices in Beirut, the popular meetings organized by Musa Sadr were characterized by emotional outpourings. The effect of these mass rallies was to incite participants, whatever their original motivations for attending, into demonstrations of collective emotion: thousands of voices chanting; clusters of frenetic women shrieking out loud, and calling for open rebellion by the *mu'ezzin*. In this turbulent atmosphere, rounds of machine-gun fire would be sprayed into the air. Frequently, random acts of vandalism and arson would be committed.

But during this early formative period of the Shi'i movement, most of the violence was maintained on a symbolic or verbal level. It was largely channelled through the public

declarations of the group's leaders. Musa Sadr introduced an abrupt change of tone in Shi'i demands, both to the local elites in South Lebanon and to the central state. His discourse was not one of submission, but rather one of demands. One of his new slogans was: "Enough of patience, enough of humble petitions".[55] The time had come for open revolt, because "the patience of the people of the south has worn thin and civil disobedience and violence are not impossible." *Thawra,* the word that was repeated over and over in public speeches signifies both "revolution" and "revolt", but it was more the second sense which the Shi'i protest intended to convey. That is clear in the following Shi'i call-to-arms: "We do not want to clash with the regime, with those who neglect us. Today, we shout out loud the wrong against us, that a cloud of injustice has followed us since the beginning of our history. Starting from today, we will no longer complain or cry.... Our name is 'men of refusal' (*râfidûn*), 'men of vengeance', men who revolt against all tyranny, even though this costs us our blood and our lives."

This reference to the loss of human life is the second theme of the new community discourse: sacrifice to the point of martyrdom. Against an enemy portrayed as crushing the Shi'i community, the community declared itself ready to pay the ultimate price in a violent confrontation. Thus the tens of thousands of men who cheered Musa Sadr in Tyre and in Baalbak took an oath to "fight until the last drop of blood for the rights of the community." Correlatively, the third type of term employed in the discourse of violence was meant to put a high value on arms. Musa Sadr would often refer to arms as the "finery of man". This analogy hardly shocked; on the contrary, it was received and approved as a truism all over Lebanon, regardless of community identity. However, during this phase of Shi'i mobilization, actual clashes with security forces were marginal, and were never deliberately provoked. In six years, during which numerous demonstrations attracted several tens of thousands of protestors, only about 20 people died in armed clashes. The verbal violence employed by the movement's leaders seems to have served as a sort of catharsis, preventing the eruption of mob violence. "Symbolic violence" was a sort of shock-absorber that buffered the extremist elements in a society where tensions were running high. For some time, confrontations between the Shi'a and the Lebanese government remained at the level of discourse.

However, increasingly, the movement's demonstrations degenerated into riots, protest against the state turned into insurrection. Violent, sometimes fatal, clashes broke out between protesters and security forces in the South, now a military zone. Indeed, the beginning of the Lebanese civil war can be put at February 26, 1975, when the member of Parliament for Sidon, Ma'ruf Sa'd, was fatally wounded by a shot fired by security brigades as he was marching at the head of a popular protest of several thousand demonstrators.

The Lebanese state: From indifference to collapse

Until the outbreak of the war, Shi'i violence was almost exclusively directed against the Lebanese state. This doesn't square with the perception that the main adversaries of the impoverished Shi'i peasants were the "feudal" landowners who siphoned off the wealth of southern Lebanon and tightly controlled representation of the Shi'a within the state. But it must be recalled that Lebanon's clan-based social structure and segmented equilibrium meant that, in order to rebel against a "boss", a Shi'i group would have to form an alliance with the boss's rival, which would only perpetuate the existing clientelist relations. For example, it was through an alliance with the Zayn and 'Usayran clans that Musa Sadr's candidate in the 1974 legislative by-election was able to defeat the candidate

[55] The discourses of Musa Sadr quoted here were translated from Arabic by T. Sicking and S. Khairallah in "The Shi'a awakening in Lebanon: A search for radical change in a traditional way", **Cemam report 1974**, Dar el-Mashreq, Beirut, 1975.

of the Parliamentary speaker, the powerful As'ad, *bey* of Nabatiyyah. The Movement of the Deprived was always careful not to split the community consensus. This was done by avoiding both personal attacks and a class-struggle discourse. The latter was not only beyond local mentalities, but had been the cause of so many setbacks for Marxist militants during the 1960s.

Despite the ease with which an anti-Israeli consensus could have been reached, Israel was not the main target of the Shi'a. On the contrary, with the exception of acts perpetrated by individuals engaged in Palestinian organizations or the *Ansâr* (the "Companions" resistance movement tolerated by the Lebanese government), hostile acts committed by Shi'i militants hardly ever went beyond the southern border of Lebanon. Verbal attacks against the PLO, too, were kept within a limited scope at that time, as if there were a tacit accord between Sh'ia and Palestinians to divide tasks in their joint cause: the Palestinians would fight the "external enemy", while the Shi'a would keep their struggle limited to attacks against the Lebanese state.

The Lebanese state was thus the main target of Shi'i aggression, first verbal and then physical. The state was, after all, the object of the demands made by the Shi'i community, and as state influence increasingly penetrated the country's peripheral regions, demands intensified. It must be recalled that state resources had increased considerably during the 1960s and 1970s. Two documents - the Charter of the Movement of the Deprived in 1973[56] and that of its successor, the *Amal* movement, in 1975[57] - expressed the demands of the Shi'i community. These two charters, which combined concrete demands (their utilitarian aspect) and incantatory slogans (their communicative aspect) expressed the one essential goal of the Shi'i community: to share in the benefits of Beirut's prosperity. During that period, the patriotism of the Shi'i protest movement was never in question. The movement approved of the "constitutional document" put forward by President Frangié in February 1976, even though its proposals didn't substantively change the existing community-based system. Two months later, *Amal* even broke with Kamal Jumblatt's LNM. In doing so, *Amal* expressed its disapproval of the leftist-Palestinian armed offensive against the state's Christian rulers and the Lebanese army. This willingness to co-operate with the Maronite establishment was apparent up until 1982 when, in the wake of the Israeli invasion, the Secretary General of *Amal* agreed, along with Bashir Gemayel, champion of "Political Maronitism" and presidential candidate, to take part in the Committee of Public Salvation. During this time, Shi'i violence was therefore far from revolutionary, but in fact rather legalist. In attacking the centre, Shi'i violence did not aim to pull down the state but rather to gain access to its privileges.

The "reformist" wing of the Shi'i movement, while losing more and more internal influence, did however manage to survive well after 1982 and the transformations that saw the mainstream of the Shi'a step up its activities and adopt new mobilization methods. A fringe of the movement succeeded, in the name of the whole Shi'i community (though in fact against the interests of the traditional elite), in gaining access to the political and economic circles of the center. The new speaker of Parliament, Husayn al-Husayni, and the cabinet minister Nabih Berri - both of whom were Secretaries General of the *Amal* movement - emerged as central figures in Lebanese political life. Berri, head of *Amal* after 1980, was Minister of Justice and Minister for South Lebanon (a portfolio created especially for him) in all governments from May 1984 to August 1988. He

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[56] **Al-Hayât**, 12 February 1974, p. 2.

[57] **Mithâq harakat Amal**, Beirut, 1975. See also "A political, social and economic reform" (in arabic), **Al-Nahâr**, 28 November 1975. The militia group, *Afwaj al-muqawama al-lubnaniyya* (Lebanese Resistance Detachments), known by its acronym *Amal* (Hope), was formed sometime around June 1975 under the leadership of Musa Sadr.

furthermore became speaker of Parliament in October 1992. Formally, the constitutional reform adopted by Lebanese MPs at Taif in September 1989 was a victory for the *Amal* movement, as it accorded more Parliamentary seats and ministers to the Shi'i community[58] and reaffirmed the tradition of having a Shi'i in the speaker's chair, now with enlarged constitutional powers. Part of the community - especially the new elites who had gained access to the center - considered this change a victory, and proof that "consociational democracy" was the political system best suited to Lebanon. But could a movement such as *Amal*, whose main platform was the abolition of political communalism to bring in a majority system, accept "changes" to the traditional order that amounted to little more than mere window dressing? In the above political order, what remains of the Lebanese state - the very existance of which was at stake in the demands of the emancipatory movement?

Prior to the war, the Lebanese state, deaf and feeble, the object of Shi'i criticism and demands, did at least have the merit of favoring economic growth and respecting individual liberties such as freedom of expression. However, while it remained the object of bargaining and competition among community elites, at no time since its "invention" by the French and their Maronite allies in 1920 did it become the foundation for the construction of a Lebanese nation. This explains why the state, confronted by rapid social changes and a serious regional crisis, began to disintegrate in phases and lose its authority and sovereignty, and why at the same time the Lebanese army broke into splinters of regional commands allied with foreign powers. Among the signs of this disintegration were the presence of foreign armies throughout Lebanon; the fact that, since 1976, every single Lebanese president[59] owed his election, either directly or indirectly, to a foreign power; the appearance of forces that were *de facto* quasi-autonomous in the different cantons of the country; and finally, the existence of two concurrent governments from August 1988 to December 1990.

The new community compromise under the Taif Accord perpetuates and aggravates the weaknesses of the traditional Lebanese political system, as the war exacerbated the sectarian cleavages. On one hand, the all-important matter of trust, which is the fundamental principle of "consociation", is missing. On the other hand, the constitutional system of consociation is incompatible with the creation of egalitarian citizenship, which alone can accord to all social groups of all communities, including those which are geographically and politically peripheral, access to the resources at the center.

Generally speaking, the collapse of the community-based Lebanese state, which had long been considered a happy democratic exception in the Arab world,[60] demonstrates the difficulty of transposing the nation-state model in regions which formerly belonged to the Ottoman empire. (Perhaps we should write to *empires*, as recent dramatic events in countries under the former Austro-Hungarian and Russo-Soviet empires seem to substantiate the same fact). Having chosen to conserve the sectarian identities inherited from the *millet* [61] by constitutionally recognizing them and building a political system on a dynamic social process of inter-communitarian relations, the Lebanese state consequently deprived itself of the separation of religion and politics, and between private

[58] Four Shi'a and two Alawis (heterodox Shi'a) were among the 9 new deputies.

[59]. Elias Sarkis (1976), Bashir Gemayel (1982), Amin Gemayel (1982), René Mo'awad (1989), Elias Hrawi (1989).

[60] E. Salem, **Modernization without revolution**, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1973.

[61] Until the adoption of a Constitution in the mid-nineteenth century, the Ottoman empire considered its non-Muslim populations (Christian and Jewish) as "nations" *(millet)*, though without territory. However, they were autonomous as regards their legal, religious and social organisation. The religious head of each community was the interlocutor for the Sublime Porte and thus played a political role.

and public domains as well. Yet this separation is a necessary condition for political modernization and for the birth of citizenship. In this respect, Lebanon set itself apart from other Arab countries in the region that conserved community differences only in the area of private law and the family code. But can we say that these Arab countries, or the state of Israel, have succeeded in avoiding the "community trap"? By denying the existence of sub-, supra- and above all trans-national loyalties, the authoritarian regimes of the Middle East intended to offer their populations a nation-state model and a secular, unitary ideology. In fact, they have built states on a even narrower clan-based social structure, undermining their civil society and provoking a reactionary social remobilization based on religion and ethnic solidarities. As for the state of Israel, it has not done any better in overcoming the contradiction between universal democratic law and respect for community differences.

In Lebanon, imprisoned by the dilemma pitting a weak community-based state against a strong and authoritarian nation-state, social movements - particularly those in the Maronite and Shi'i communities - opted for revolution.

Revolutionary insurrection and communitarian warfare

From 1976 to 1982, while the state was in the process of dissolving, acts of political violence committed by and against the Lebanese Shi'a progressively changed both in character and in intensity. The symbolic and protest-oriented violence of the past became open warfare. At the outset of the war, when the Christian militia entered into armed conflict with Palestinian movements and their allies among leftist and Sunni militia, the Shi'i community was well behind in training to bear arms. These other groups, anticipating an explosion of violence, had in fact been openly conducting armed training procedures for some ten years. Within the Shi'i community, however, the *Amal* movement had been created in 1975, at which time only approximately a hundred members had been armed and trained by the Palestinians. This relative weakness, combined with the recent urban migration of a sizeable part of the community, explains why so many Shi'a fled in panic, without offering any resistance, when they came under attack by the Christian militia. An attack in early 1976 forced some 100,000 Shi'a to evacuate their homes in east Beirut, notably in the Karantina and Nab'a districts. As a consequence, the Shi'a closed themselves into three geographical clusters: in Baalbak-Hermel in the Biqa' region; in the Jabel Amil region and Tyre; and in the southern suburbs of Beirut, from the "green line" - the frontier between Christians and Muslims traced by the Beirut-Damascus motorway - to the beaches south of the international airport. After the Israeli invasion of 1982, the Lebanese army lost control of all three of these Shi'i regions, which were partly occupied by the Syrian and Israeli armies and partly controlled by militiamen supported by dissident units such as the 6th Brigade.

From then on, armed force was used against rivals to protect community territory. During fifteen years of war, the rare attempts to go across the "green line" and win an armed conflict in enemy territory met with tragic defeat. The joint "Progressive Palestinian" offensive led by Kamal Jumblatt against the government and army in March-April 1976; Bashir Gemayel's abortive coup de force against Zahlah in 1981; the Lebanese Forces' attempt in 1982 to penetrate in the Druze Shuf mountain after the Israeli army or to conquer west Beirut between September 1983 and February 1984 all met with catastrophic results and resulted in more popular exodus in fear of reprisal. This explains why, most of the time, the militia groups remained within their community territory; it was within each of these newly defined sub-spaces, with their relatively fixed borders, that political violence developed.

Armed violence was employed to become a dominant, instead of remaining a dominated, group. In order to impose their hegemony within the Muslim areas, Shi'i militiamen

fought, sometimes simultaneously and sometimes successively, the Palestinian resistance fighters who dominated the Beirut suburbs and southern Lebanon since the early 1970s, and the Druze and Sunni militia groups which controlled West Beirut *intra muros*. For example, *Amal*'s central forces - *Jaysh Amal* - led a long siege, from December 1985 to February 1988, against the Palestinians in the refugee camps of Beirut (Borj al-Barajina, Sabra and Shatila) as well as Tyre (Bass and Rashidiya). Militarily, the Shi'a militia proved worse than mediocre, despite massive assistance from Syria, which supplied them with ammunition. It was only by starving civilians and refusing them access to hospitals, and due to the back-up of the Syrian heavy artillery, that the Shi'a were ultimately able to emerge victorious. The guerrilla war they fought in Beirut against Druze, Sunni and secular militia fighters from 1984 to 1987, a guerilla referred to as the "green (Muslim) terror", was chiefly characterized by manhunts: searches and interrogations, arrests in the middle of the night, traps and, above all, several hundred assassinations.

Without neglecting the international dimensions of the conflict - the "War of the Camps", for example, was mainly a conflict by proxy between Syria and the PLO - one could propose that Shi'i violence during this period aimed at implementing objectives set out during the pre-war period but which could not be attained through symbolic violence alone. The violence was aimed at putting an end to Shi'i status as a subordinate community dominated, alternatively, by a state (the Ottoman empire, the French mandate, the Lebanese republic), a revolutionary movement (the PLO), a neighbouring power (Israel), or another Lebanese community. By 1983, for they had become the largest single community within Lebanon, the Shi'a decided to use the weight of their numbers to impose majority rule, although not through democratic processes. "I have a million soldiers behind me", proclaimed Nabih Berri in that year, alluding to the fact that the Shi'i community actually comprised more than a third of Lebanon's population, much more than the official figure of 19 per cent. After the exodus from the South provoked by the Israeli invasion of 1982, the Shi'a had become the majority not only in Beirut's southern suburbs but also in the western half of the capital, which for so long had been the fiefdom of two wealthy urban communities - the Sunnis and the Greek Orthodox - who held in contempt the "rustic" manners of the Shi'a. Thus, the reversing of the community equilibrium, which had not been possible through political and constitutional means or through Shi'i protest, was being achieved through force. However, after 1984, when Shi'i hegemony spread through the "Muslim part" of Lebanon, a unified Lebanese state had ceased to exist. The original source of the conflict had disappeared and had been replaced by hostilities between factions and, above all, conflict within each community.

Violence came to be used in different forms to achieve other objectives as well. The principle of majority rule, for example, with its danger of totalitarianism, would not affect only the Muslim allies of the Shi'a and those secular parties who recruited mainly among the Shi'a but claimed to oppose a uniform concept of the Shi'i community. In the name of community unanimity, a rivalry for the Shi'i leadership became a major factor on the Shi'i political arena. After 1982, *Amal*, which had successfully struggled to impose itself over the traditional community leadership and the leftist parties, had to respond to a challenge by *Hizbollah* and its many satellite organizations, such as *Amal Islami.*[62] The conflict between *Amal* and *Hizbollah* was, to be sure, a conflict over ideology (pluralistic secularism versus Islamic rule) and tactics (implementation of security arrangement with Israel in the South versus *jihâd* against the Jewish state). Above all, however, it was a

[62] The group was created in the summer of 1982 by Husayn Musawi after he had been expelled from *Amal* because he criticized the collusion between the movement's leadership and the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) in South Lebanon. *Hizbollah* ("God's party"), founded in 1978, became active at the same time in the Baalbak-Hermel region. The following groups can be considered as being linked to *Hizbollah*: Islamic Jihad, al-Fajr al-Islami, Islamic Liberation Organization, Muslim Martyrs, al-Haqq, al-Jihad, Junud Allah, and The Young Muslim Mujahidun.

conflict for community leadership, and it soon led to an open struggle between the two militia forces, each defending a separate territory - the Jabal Amil region for *Amal*, and the Biqa' region for *Hizbollah*. Control of the *dahiyya*, the southern suburbs of Beirut, became the stakes to be won or lost in the conflict. Here again, as with the hostilities outside of the community, the international dimension aggravated the competitive violence: the struggle between *Amal* and *Hizbollah* became another war by proxy, because lurking not far in the background were Syria and Iran, opposed in this conflict though associated in a "strategic alliance" against Iraq. Not surprisingly, attacks and truces between *Amal* and *Hizbollah* were often decided and negotiated in Teheran and Damascus: the truce of January 1989 resulted from the end of the first Gulf War, and the final accord of October 1990 marked the end of the fratricidal Shi'i war.

War, political violence and terrorism

Besides the defensive and competitive community violence, a third form of violence, often qualified as "terrorism", emerged during the revolutionary phase of the struggle. Bomb attacks (such as the 1983 attacks against American and French army barracks of the Multinational Force in Beirut) targeted multiple victims and aimed chiefly at spreading terror, hostages were taken (more than twenty Westerners were held in Lebanon in 1986-1987), and suicide missions were carried out (Israeli headquarters in Tyre were destroyed by an automobile packed with explosives in 1983). To analyse this form of violence, spectacular though marginal, four main questions must be posed.

First, at what point does one cross the line between "struggle for liberation" and "terrorism"? As we know, these acts of terrorism were acknowledged and interpreted by Shi'i militants, ideologues and tacticians as acts of war against Israel, an occupying power, and its allies, both local (the Christian militia in Lebanon) and international (the Western powers). The Shi'a, who constituted the majority of the population in South Lebanon, were the principal political and economic victims of the Israeli-Palestinian war after 1970 and the Israeli occupation after 1978. They were thus the first to adhere to the armed struggle against foreign enemies. Neither the Lebanese government nor the international community (in Resolution 425 of the United Nations Security Council) contested in principle their struggle for liberation. The issue was rather the use of violence against foreign civilians as part of the conflict. This raises casuistical questions of the legitimacy of certain forms of violence as well as the existence of unequal forces between a local militia group and an over-armed state. "Hostage-taking is the atomic bomb of the poor", said the wife of a French hostage, to explain the terrorist acts.

Second, when terrorism is put in an international perspective, one must examine the relationship between terrorist groups and the foreign states that sponsor them. Both the study of the Fu'ad, Ali Saleh's "Shi'i" terrorist network in France[63] and the liberation of the last hostages in 1991 following the end of the Gulf War show that most of these groups are financed by those states, including Iran and Syria, which opted in favor of a terrorist strategy in the second half of the 1980s. When, at the outset of the 1990s, they abandoned this strategy due to the changed international situation, they quickly and with almost total success imposed a return to international legality.

Third, the instrumental use of terrorist groups by foreign states raises the question of the relation between the Shi'i social movement and such groups. Here, the problem is not so much the organizational aspect of this relationship. We know, despite the constant denials from *Amal* and *Hizbollah* leaders, that the same men (militiamen) are often present at the same sites (around mosques) but under different denominations, whether the "Oppressed

[63] D. Bigo, "Les attentats de 1986 en France: Un cas de violence transnationale et ses implications", **Cultures et conflits** N° 4, 1992.

of the World", the *Jihâd islâmî*, or other like nominal allegiances. We can therefore inquire whether the terrorist phenomenon in Lebanon demonstrates Michel Wieviorka's inversion model, according to which such violence reveals "an alienation with regard to social or community experience on which the actor bases his actions".[64] There can, it would seem, be no definite answers to this question. On one hand, the testimony of liberated hostages[65] and the biographical information on certain of the authors of anti-Israeli attacks in South Lebanon[66] indicate a definite social, even psychological, alienation on the part of extremist militants, as well as their doctrinaire rigidity. They show the same characteristics that can be found among similar groups in Europe (Red Brigades, Action Directe), whose implacable logic led ultimately to the groups' self-destruction. But on the other hand, the hagiographic literature,[67] and above all the number and strength of popular demonstrations commemorating the memory of the martyrs, indicates that the action of terrorists, even if criticized by those in the Shi'i population who were victimized by reprisals, was in line with a majority political vision, all the more so that this action, as we shall see later, fit into a culture of violence. In this sense, "terrorism" does not involve an inversion of the social movement but rather the extreme accomplishment of its aims.

Finally, we must question the relationship between terrorism and Shi'i Islam. This link has been denounced by rightist in the West for whom the confrontation with Islam, and above all with Shi'i Islam as incarnated by the Islamic Republic of Iran, has replaced the war against communism. The debate on this subject, in Lebanese Shi'i publications such as *al-Ahd* and *al-Badîl*, and in the sermons and writings of community religious authorities, clearly shows the contradiction between, on one hand, a doctrine committed to the respect for life (by condemning suicide, for example) and the realization of earthly happiness and, on the other hand, the casuistry invented in the context of *jihâd* (legitimate war) which justifies terrorist actions, including martyrdom.[68] In sum, the perpetrators of violence were fully aware that they were violating international law. Indeed, international law was strengthened by their transgression, and in the end they accepted to abide by it. This contradiction reveals the contingent character of the development of Shi'i terrorism and, moreover, refutes any notion of a preordained or "fatal" relationship between the Muslim Shi'i faith and terrorism. Indeed, to refute the notion of the "specificity" of Shi'i Islam with respect to terrorist violence, one has only to undertake a comparative historical study with ancient Greece, Czarist Russia, the Zionist movement under the British mandate, or, in the present, with other Lebanese communities (bomb attacks and assassinations of Maronite leaders; the "Abdallah Brothers" terrorist group).

To understand the central place of violence in the constitution of a new Shi'i community discourse, it is necessary to make a detour to reflect on the political culture which nourished the explosion of political violence in Lebanon, on its historical and mythical roots, and on its reactivation by belligerent actors.

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64 M. Wieviorka, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-19 and 438.

65 Especially T. Waite's various interviews and R. Auque, **Un otage à Beyrouth**, Filipacchi, Paris, 1988.

66 M. Kramer, "Sacrifice and fratricide in Shi'ite Lebanon", **Terrorism and political violence** N° 3 (3), 1991.

67 In periodicals, leaflets and books such as **Al-tahaddi wal-tasaddi**, Vol. 2, "Al-shuhada al-arab al-lubnaniyyun fi junub lubnan, 1982-1987", Dar Tlas, Damascus, 1988.

68 M. Kramer, "The moral logic of Hizballah", in W. Reich (ed.), **Origins of terrorism: Psychologies, ideologies, theologies, states of mind**, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990.

The Culture of Violence

To fully understand political violence, we cannot content ourselves merely with an examination of its external mechanisms, logical links, causal relations and successive forms. It is necessary to go straight to the heart of society in order to identify the cultural resources in which the authors of violence find inspiration for their acts. And once this is done, we must go on to determine the mechanisms which enable political violence to take its place at the center of the system of signification for the social groups involved in armed conflict.

Oppression and segmentation

When looking for the cultural factors in the Lebanese Shi'i community that provided fertile ground for political violence, we are not searching for the content of Shi'i/Lebanese/Arab/Middle Eastern traditions, but rather their current communication codes and social interaction which combine to define group structure.[69] Nor are we referring to the history of the Shi'i community or to the Shi'i interpretation[70] of the history of Lebanon and the Middle East. Notwithstanding its polysemic, controversial and manifestly "imagined"[71] character, the past has tended to be systematically distorted and over-interpreted[72] in Lebanon since the outset of the war, indeed to a point where "history itself was at war".[73] Any attempt at interpreting history would merely lead to conflicting conclusions about the cultural identities of the Lebanese over time.

Furthermore, the above reference to Lebanese/Arab/Middle Eastern culture should not be confused with the special kind of psychology that developed within the society in the context of war. The length of the confrontations, the intermingling of objectives, the fragmentation of the players involved as well as the levels of the conflict, the rapid and almost wholesale substitution of illegal violence for more "regular" forms of violence, and the confusion of ethical values and ideals were all factors that no doubt contributed to a collective sense of alienation which spared virtually none of the actors in the Lebanese conflict, from pacifist civilians to the soldiers of the foreign armies stationed in the country.[74] Indeed, involvement in battle served to merge individual and group aspirations.[75] It brought the fighters a kind of personal liberation from a frustrated life by pretending to give them control of their own identity and it sometimes offered participation in a paramilitary organization which was seen as fulfilling the fundamental aspiration of their native group.

Beyond these behavioural responses to the war, and beyond the instrumentalization of history, the phenomenon of political violence can been understood, and its importance for the structuring of society analysed, through two dominant aspects of Lebanese political

[69] See P. Brass, "Ethnic groups and the state" in P. Brass (ed.), **Ethnic groups and the state**, Croom Helm, London, 1985.

[70] As analysed by Ahmad Beydoun, *op. cit*.

[71] B. Anderson, **Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism**, Verso, London, 1983.

[72] K. Salibi, **A house of many mansions: The history of Lebanon reconsidered**. I.B. Tauris, London, 1988.

[73] A. Beydoun, *op.cit*.

[74] J. Malakey, " Notes on the psychology of war in Lebanon", in H. Barakat (ed.), **Toward a viable Lebanon**, Crom Helm, London, 1988.

[75] J. McDougals, "La génération de la kalachnikov", in E. Fernea (ed.), **Women and the family in the Middle East**, University of Texas Press, Austin, 1985.

culture: the institutionalization of oppression and the durability (although not without significant historical alterations) of antagonistic segmentation.

During the "glorious" decades of the 1960s and 1970s, anthropologists multiplied local studies of diverse areas of Lebanon, such as the work of Peters on Jabal Amil,[76] Gubser on the Biqa' area,[77] and Gilsenan on the northern region of Akkar,[78] to name only a few. These studies demonstrated that, to a significant extent, local groups continued to be dominated by a single individual (*bey,* or *za'îm*) assisted by his strongmen (the *'abaday*). Far from vanishing with the mandatory régime and the birth of the Lebanese republic, this system of domination was perpetuated and modernized, and became a set pattern within the new political institutions.

This kind of domination stretched back to Ottoman rule (and even earlier) according to a well identifiable pattern: it was founded on the armed defence of a territory, the control of agricultural production, and the raising of tax revenues in the name of the Sultan, on behalf of whom the military exercised its power. On the whole, the economic, military and political institution of the *iqtâ'* resembled more a tenant-farming arrangement than an outright feudal system. Economic domination was exercised in a context of severe competition for land and other scarce resources, and rested on the use and abuse of open violence: "in a human milieu where the opposition of two rivals degenerates, often in ruinous destruction and bloody acts of vengeance, brutality and slyness were the recognized qualities of the ruling authorities in order to contain such rivalries....just like the qualities of a true chief. The ability to be hard and arbitrary was necessary to maintain public order".[79] On the symbolic level, domination by the local landlord (the *muqata'ji)* was made all the more complete by his exclusive appropriation of honors (thanks to his genealogy) and of the shared memory of the community (limited to the history of his family). Mild violence (imposition of etiquette, respect of customs, the maintenance of patriarchal traditions) was combined with more open forms of violence (threats against opponents, chasing laborers off the land, attacks by strongmen, feuds, kidnappings and elopements). These forms of violence were enhanced by what Michael Gilsenan calls the "sanctification of violence"[80], either through the re-enactment of dramatic events of the past, or the reiterative narration of violent acts and situations lived and relived by the local community as a whole. Thus the social order was structured by a network of unequal exchanges which operated less on a clientelist basis than through the exercise of physical and symbolic violence.

The birth of a republican and parliamentary political system in Lebanon in 1920 changed the outward form of this domination. It moved from a "feudal" system to one with a public administration and elected officials, particularly mayors and Members of Parliament. However, as we have seen with the social and economic history of the Shi'a of the Jabal Amil, and as Peters discusses in his study, the Lebanese elected official acts as a mediator between the state and the population. As the representative of his community, the official is able to short-circuit the relation between the population and the state. Locally, he can use his position in Parliament to impose his patronage: in the eyes of the people, elected officials are, virtually by definition, the holders of power. What

76 E.L. Peters, "Aspects of ranks and status among muslims in a Lebanese village", in J. Pitt-Rivers (ed.), **Mediterranean countrymen**, Mouton, Paris-Den Haagen, 1963.

77 P. Gubser, "The Zu'ama' of Zahlah", **The Middle East journal** Vol. 27 N° 2, 1973.

78 M. Gilsenan, "Domination as social practice. Patrimonialism in North Lebanon: Arbitrary power, desacration, and the aesthetics of violence", **Critique of Anthropology** Vol. 6, N° 1, 1986.

79 D. Chevallier, **La société du Mont Liban à l'époque de la révolution industrielle en Europe**, Geuthner, Paris, 1971.

80 *ibid.,* p. 30.

changed in the new system of "republican" domination is that the "landlord" himself had become an elected official and could thus exercise extended powers within the state. Moreover, the landlord acquired part of his political power from the reciprocal relations he maintained with the members of the new urban middle classes. As for the state, it could no longer be considered as a "superior entity" that could be counted on to arbitrate between the landlords and the local populations.

To be sure, this clientelist system is more egalitarian than an outright feudal arrangement; but in rural areas and with the new industrial proletariat, coercion remains the chief arm of control of the social elites. Gubser's study of the practices of political bosses (the *za'im*-s) in the small town of Zahlah during an electoral period, as well as Johnson's study of political engineering in the Sunni areas of Beirut,[81] give us clear evidence of the degree to which domination by an individual has been accepted and absorbed by the community. Fouad Ajami, an American scholar who is himself a Shi'i from South Lebanon, offers an astounding description of the young Kamel (bey) el-As'ad returning home, in a splendid automobile, to his immense paternal mansion at Tayyaba after his university studies in France. Back to Lebanon in order to succeed his father as local strongman and Member of Parliament for Nabatiyyah, and speaker of Parliament, he stipulated arrogantly that any local village people wanting an audience with him must wear a suit and tie.[82]

In the decades that followed independence, the exercise of violence was modernized through the use of efficient technology, with the complicity of state institutions. Thus, access to the judicial system, far from being democratized, became more difficult for the dominated segments of the population, not only for financial reasons (due above all to the corruption of magistrates) but also because of the sophistication of the arcana of the judicial process. One can say the same thing of the entire civil service, which was unable to bypass the community bosses in order to provide ordinary citizens with a genuine means of access to the state.

In the final analysis, what changed was not so much the nature of the system - which evolved from "feudal" to "democratic" status - but the quality of the instruments of coercion which the dominant class had at its disposal. Before the war, local strongmen were armed with hunting rifles or revolvers, while most families had a weapon stashed away in a bedroom cupboard. Every day, the press reported yet another accident with one of these weapons as its origin. Rare, for example, were the marriages at which someone was not wounded by a stray bullet fired off in a volley of shots by a joyful celebrator. This changed drastically within a few months of the beginning of the war, with the training of paramilitaries and the importing of Kalashnikov machine guns and Czech rifles, followed by heavy weaponry including armoured vehicles, tanks and various kinds of missiles. With the disappearance of state-based legality, oppression by and of private individuals took on the dimensions of a full-scale war: between 20,000 and 30,000 people were abducted and detained in private prisons, and group assassinations were common.

But the escalation of violence in Lebanon was not the result solely of the institutionalization and modernization of the unequal relationship between dominant and dominated. It has been at the core of the divisions and segmented antagonisms that structure societies in the Middle East as a whole, even in Israel, although varying forms of government in modern times have tended to hide this shared heritage. The obvious segmentation of Lebanese society into religious communities makes it a paradigmatic

[81] M. Johnson, **Class and client in Beirut: The Sunni Lebanese community and the Lebanese state 1840-1985,** Ithaca Press, London, 1986.

[82] F. Ajami, *op. cit.*, p. 69.

example of the pattern of social relations familiar today throughout the Arab world which stretches back to the *jahiliyya* (the time before the birth of Islam). This pattern is characterized by the juxtaposition of equal agnatic groups, relations between which are not hierarchical but based on the constant conflictual search for equilibrium. According to the segmentation model (at least theoretically)[83], every solidarity group, be it a tribe, a clan or an extended family, relates either to the *Qaisi* or to the *Yamani* faction, a division which refers to the mythic organization of Arab tribes at the time of the *jahiliyya*. This group adherence determines alliances and antagonisms. Even if it is possible to reverse these alliances and antagonisms through a scission within the group, no segment of society escapes this classification. In this segmented system, which preceded the state order and is still perpetuated beyond its control, the maintenance of external security involves a pattern of aggression and reprisals (vendetta) against neighbouring groups. Once started, "each reciprocation being thought of as a justified response to the preceding injury, grievances never end and balance is never restored."[84] Violence is deemed necessary not only as the intrinsic consequence of segmented divisions but also as their point of articulation. It tends to feed upon itself and creates still wider divisions between communities. The internal solidarity within each group involves the use of coercion on its members through submission to the group's code of honor. Clans struggle to maintain social and material order and, even more so, to defend a certain "symbolic capital"[85]: the group identity, the values to which its members are attached and the rights which they consider to be inalienable.

The notions of oppression and segmentation sometimes give rise to quite radical conclusions. They tend, however, to belong more to the domain of political confrontation than that of sociological analysis. Take, for example, the following hasty judgement: "Much Middle Eastern terrorism can be traced to the tribalism that still colors the politics of that region. The nomadic Arab's fierce independence and ruthless concern for narrow interests are still apparent, and have meant that Middle East governments are rarely able to function as ultimate authorities".[86] Recent studies have shown more subtlety and produced richer results by applying to war-torn Lebanon the concepts and categories forged by the fourteenth century philosopher Ibn Khaldun to describe the cycles of violence that were not uncommon in the Maghreb societies of that era. The principle of *'asabiyya*, or blood solidarity, pitted clans against one another in competition for the *mulk* (urban power and its rewards) in the name of a *da'wa* (a politico-religious prediction whose message changed according to opportunities).[87] An explanation along the lines of Ibn Khaldun's model can help us understand the divisions, the ideological *volte-faces*, and the reversal of group alliances during the Lebanese war.

This analysis emphasizes the role of violence in structuring the cohesion and dynamic of a social group. For example, between 1982 (the assassination of Bashir Gemayel) and 1986 (the triumph of Samir Ja'ja' over the other lieutenants of Bashir), the Lebanese Forces were jolted by a series of *intifâdha,* or insurrections, which were above all factional conflicts for the control of the Maronite community, the "Christian regions", and the (Maronite) presidency of the Lebanese state. In the case of the Shi'a, the same phenomenon could be observed between 1986 and 1989, when clashes broke out between local warlords in the Tyre region and between the Hamadeh, Mughniyyah and Husayni clans in the Baalbak region. At the same time, local factions switched from the secular

83 As exemplified by E. Evans-Pritchard, **The Nuer**, The Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1960.

84 D. Riches (ed.), *op. cit.,* p.31.

85 P. Bourdieu, *op. cit.,* pp. 217-219.

86 **New York Times**, 7 July 1985.

87 A. al-Azmeh, **Ibn Khaldun: An essay in reinterpretation**, Frank Cass, London, 1981.

discourse of *Amal* to the Islamist discourse of *Hizbollah.* Further conflicts erupted between *Amal* and *Hizbollah* for the control of Beirut's south suburb, of the strategic region of Iqlim el-Tuffah, and more generally for the domination and exclusive representation in the Lebanese state of the entire Shi'i community.

Nevertheless, oppression and segmentation should not be considered immmutable dimensions of Lebanese political culture. We must examine their historicity in order to understand the role of violence in the reactions to the collapse of the Lebanese state and to the challenge of the war. Indeed, the fifteen years of war witnessed a great richness and flexibility of social innovation in order to avoid the rigidity of the antagonistic *face-à-face*. On many occasions, the shift from physical to verbal forms of violence, such as lies and the political art of cunning, led to a certain de-escalation and appeasement. Traditional customs such as hospitality were also a precious warrant against the spread of violence.[88] They were used, for example, in the complex game of alliance and opposition between lieutenants (incidentally cousins and brothers-in-law) of the militia factions of Bashir Gemayel's Lebanese Forces. Furthermore, this same casuistical tactic allowed, in November 1991, the takers of American hostages to suddenly proclaim "useless" acts of hostage taking, in order to call for the release of Lebanese prisoners in Israel. But all in all, the collapse of the state after the first two years of the war gave a new dimension to the phenomena of oppression and segmentation. The issues (even if lacking) on which the negotiations between the conflicting parties had focused simply disappeared, as did the consensus of the community elites that had earned Lebanon its reputation as the democratic exception in the Middle East. Violence regulated by the state was replaced with inter-community violence organized and perpetrated by the militia groups. The community-based organization of civil society was replaced with a new, much more divisive and oppressive, social order, in which warlords reigned over their own turf.

Militia groups and civil society

Although the new militia rule was largely unpredictable, to qualify it as anarchical would be excessive. It did succeed in establishing order at the local level, largely as a replacement for the non-existing national-level state order. One could even say it was a sort of "societal" order. Indeed, one basic characteristic of militia violence is that society is closely implicated in its practices, while at the same time being its victim.

In the new militia order that replaced the community order, a process of "democraticization of the instruments of violence"[89] went hand-in-hand with the society's growing obsession with security. After 1975, the supply of firearms was swelled by the militia groups and allied countries. A private market for arms developed, and prices were forced down. Within a few years, an automatic Kalashnikov rifle could be had for US$ 40 and a high-powered arm for only a few hundred dollars. Only a few years after the founding of *Hizbollah*, in 1982, its members were equipped with M-113 armed personal carriers, Sagger anti-tank weapons, GRAD rockets, and towed artillery pieces. In this environment, lacking any public order, every armed group was tempted to dispense its own justice or resort to predatory acts for its own benefit. The result was a frequent escalation of the firepower used in the civil war and, as a consequence, a widening of the urban areas affected by the armed conflicts, whether between two rival gangs armed with Kalashnikovs at a street corner or so-called random bombings (they were in fact aimed at precise targets) by missiles and 130mm canons.

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[88] J. Hannoyer, "L'hospitalité, économie de la violence", **Maghreb-Machrek** N° 123, 1989.

[89] A.R. Norton, *op. cit.*, p. 127.

From the moment the state's legitimacy was shattered and public order could no longer be maintained, the militia groups organized community defence on a territorial basis, by tracing with a line of fire the frontier demarcation between different militia groups. Individuals from other communities were expelled *manu militari*, members of a community outside home territory were forced to return home, and community members were forbidden from leaving their home area. In short, the border was drawn between "us" and "them".

The remarkable stability of the territorial borders within Lebanon, from the first few months of the war that would last fifteen years, reveals the defensive nature of the strategies of communitarian groups, each loyal to its militia group and each communicating with other groups through a combination of threats and negotiations. Closed in by a devastated no man's land overgrown with weeds, fortified by the charred carcasses of burnt automobiles, sandbags and makeshift barricades, the militia territories could be entered only through check-points where militiamen armed with machine guns conducted searches and interrogations before letting people pass through. In Beirut and in its suburbs, some militiamen hid in abandoned buildings along the line of demarcation, the existence of which they reinforced by blindly shooting rounds of ammunition at anyone they spotted on the "other side." These snipers - whose victims numbered in the thousands - fulfilled a very precise mission: while political negotiations and "blind" bombings were taking place, their shooting sprees punished by death any violation of the newly defined borders.[90] Their punishment was dispensed equally to those attempting to enter a territory from the outside and those from the group seeking to flee the community's enforced cohesion. Rule was further enforced by the omnipresent sight of summary executions of captured enemies: naked corpses strewed street corners, others were dragged behind automobiles, and in newspapers one could see the photos of the victims of kidnappings or summary executions. This phantasmatic violence was accompanied by a rhetoric of vengeance - issued by one "camp" to another - following kidnappings, assassinations and bombings.

In this new territorially-based "order", the figure of the armed militiaman was central, replacing in the hierarchy the political bosses and the economic entrepreneurs who had dominated Lebanon's social landscape before the war. But the militia groups were not the "armed populace". This is why the second important change in the culture of violence was social in nature: the evolution of the status, at once minority and dominant, of the militiaman in the society that produced him. Various attempts to estimate the number of militiamen involved in the armed conflicts throughout the war have put the figure at around 50,000 (of which 15,000 for the *Amal* movement in February 1984, and 5,000 for *Hizbollah)*; barely one man for every ten old enough to bear arms. Certain battles on both sides of the line of demarcation between East Beirut and West Beirut were waged by a few hundred men at most. It is important to distinguish between the ill-trained "voluntary" militiamen, who were ready to take up arms in a local crisis, and the "combatants", who were salaried and permanent militiamen. As the militia presence became more long-term, these salaried combatants began to be recruited at younger ages - at first under 20 years and then younger than 15 years - and increasingly among peripheral populations, notably those which had been displaced because of the war. Unlike the armed guards of the traditional bosses (the *qabaday*s), these non-urban militiamen, who made up most of *Amal* and the troops of the Lebanese Forces, were on the whole outsiders and unfamiliar with the urban populations on whom they were imposing order by the force of arms.

90 P. Meney, **Même les tueurs ont une mère**, La Table ronde, Paris, 1986, pp. 160-161; H. al-Sheikh, **The story of Zahra**, Quartet Books, London, 1986.

Above all others, the local ringleaders incarnated the triumph of the militia order. Their numerous outward displays of dominance - paramilitary outfits, deployment of arms and armed vehicles to accompany their movements, ostentatious display of their new wealth, their arrogant behaviour in public (especially behind the wheel of a car), unpredictable and limitless demands - made them the putative successors of the traditional community leaders who had been disqualified by the war. In every district, the leader of each local group, charged with promoting a security project, owed his authority to his strategic and redistributive capacities, though his legitimacy was still based on tradition, lineage, property ownership, religion and other such ascribed attributes. This chief - the *za'îm* - was quite often a young man. He organized the actions of his own sector, and it was at his house that arms were stocked.[91] At this local level, objectives were not political, and even less so transcendental, but rather tactical: the goal was to achieve a hegemonic position and to defend it, entailing a form of violence not unlike that practised by street gangs or the Mafia. The aim of each group was to dominate, intimidate, remove, or co-opt a rival or neighbouring group through a subtle game of protection and alliance. This is how, for example, Da'ud Da'ud, the president of the *Amal* executive council and head of the movement in South Lebanon, succeeded in carving out for himself a veritable fiefdom before being assassinated by unknown rivals in September 1988.[92]

In each district, the militia headquarters became the seat of a mini-government ruling over the local population under its control. It was a rule untempered by a judiciary, a religious authority, or the commentary of the media, as all three were under direct militia control. Inside each district, one could observe the omnipresent and exclusive signs of the locally hegemonic group, the intimidation and physical aggression against deviants (for example, in regions controlled by *Hizbollah*, against those who drank alcohol, or women not wearing a veil or *hijâb*). At the blockades that closed off access to the district and at strategic checkpoints, arbitrary decision was the rule. The militia groups inflicted threats, humiliations and physical brutality if not outright imprisonment and assassination on the very civilians they were supposed to be protecting.

A third important change was observable in the economic sphere, where militia violence replaced state violence. The militia groups estalished their own authority on the ruins of the destroyed state order. From the very first few months of the war, militia groups waged urban battles over the economic activity on which Lebanon's prosperity had been based: the banking industry at the heart of Beirut, the customs inspection at the city's port and airport, the electric power stations, the telephone system, the oil refineries, the main communication routes, as well as the new industrial zones surrounding the capital. After twenty years, the ravages of willful destruction totalled more than US$ 20 billion.[93] Moreover, by militarily taking control of the economy, the militia groups were able to guarantee themselves huge financial windfalls, which were fattened even more through the arms trade and, within no time at all, through the widespread trafficking of drugs from the Lebanese plain of Biqa' and elsewhere. This predatory system was based on a co-operative/competitive relationship among the different militia groups - not unlike that between Mafia "families" - as well as on their shared opposition to everything that promised to bring back a legal system, such as the reconstruction of the administration, the deployment of police forces, and the reopening of normal economic channels. As late as 1989, one of the most destructive episodes in the civil war was provoked by an attempt by Prime Minister Michel Aoun to close the ports along the Lebanese coastline that had been illegally installed by each of the militia groups.

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91 G. Delafon, **Beyrouth. Les soldats de l'islam**, Stock, Paris, 1989, p. 154.

92 See his interview in **Al-Shirâ'** N° 296, 23 November 1987, pp. 16-18.

93 G. Corm, "Hégémonie milicienne et problème du rétablissement de l'Etat" in **Liban: les guerres de l'Europe et de l'Orient, 1840-1992**, Gallimard, Paris, 1992, pp. 225-257.

Militia money was partly used to construct a clientelist network by the means of social redistribution, with the regular remuneration of the militiamen as a top priority. Though the pay was meagre at the outset of the war, militia salaries were still an important motive for many sign-ups. After the collapse of Lebanon's financial system in 1984, militia pay in hard currency indeed became a major source of income for tens of thousand of families from all Lebanese communities. A hundred dollars a month - twice as much in the *Hizbollah* militia, which benefited from a monthly allocation from Iran of roughly US$ 7 million[94] - represented a salary much higher than the Lebanese state was paying teachers, or even members of its own "national" army. Also, all the major militia groups set up generous medical, social and educational assistance schemes in the areas under their control as a way of winning over the local populations. In the Druze regions held by the PSP (Progressist Socialist Party), in the Kisarwan fiefdom of the Lebanese Forces, in the south Beirut suburb controlled by *Hizbollah,* and in the frontier region to the South held by the pro-Israeli South Lebanon Army, militia management replaced state control. This included the taxation, at higher levels than state taxes before the war, of the people and of economic activities.[95] Provision of essential infrastructure and activities, including the construction of roads, the organization of public transportation, water distribution, telephone services and the provision of gasoline, were taken over by the militia groups. The result after fifteen years of war was that the population was doubly alienated from the state: not only had people become accustomed to *not* relying on state services, but they had transferred their loyalty, or their submission, to an illegally armed force.

Fourthly, it must be recalled that militia order is much more than a newly-installed security, social and economic order. It also generally implies, on a given territory, the forging of a new identity structured by the exercise of physical and symbolic violence. In Lebanon, the protective sealing off of community territory that, as we have seen, necessitated the defence of frontiers and the submission of deviants, was strengthened within each region by a monopoly over the media, by the instrumental use of religion, and by taking charge of the youth population. As far as the means of communication were concerned, the militia groups did not limit themselves to negative acts, such as the killing of journalists, the banning of certain newspapers, and the destruction of archives and printing materials. They each quickly developed a "communications" sector, using state-of-the-art audiovisual technology, in order to wage a fierce propaganda war throughout Lebanon and beyond its borders. The Lebanese militia groups were much more modern and politically savvy than conservative and fundamentalist defence leagues such as the paramilitary Protestants in Northern Ireland.[96]

This was all the more true given that one of the main strengths of the Lebanese militia groups was their ability to attract intellectuals and professors, who contributed their knowledge (of history, psychology, etc.) to the militants' cause. In the various religious groups one could also readily find clerics willing to dress up the militia's culture of discord *(fitna)* in the garb of theological discourse, thus legitimating it from the top of the religious hierarchy. Some clerics, to be sure, did so out of profound conviction. Others, however, were guided by a strategy aimed at strengthening community identities and hence reinforcing their own socio-political authority. Many religious figures and intellectuals failed to resist the pressures of a violence that had become hegemonic within each community space. In this respect, once again the Lebanese militia groups differ from

[94] **Al-Dustûr**, 14 October 1985. It was estimated that the resources of the movement were approximately US$ 10 million per month at the time that the Iranian *Hizbollah* was financing its Lebanese counterpart. After 1988, the Iranian government took direct charge of the movement and the sum decreased sharply.

[95] E. Picard, "Le rôle du Front Libanais dans la guerre civile", **Maghreb-Machrek** N° 90, 1980.

[96] E. Picard, **Milices libanaises et paramilitaries**, *op. cit.*

the paramilitary Protestants in Northern Ireland, who have failed to win support from intellectuals and religious authorities and, thus, to renew their identity resources.

Finally, the construction of a new group identity was made possible through the submission of the education system to militia control. Public instruction, which had been deficient before the war, collapsed totally, chiefly for economic reasons. Each militia group took advantage of this state of affairs by strengthening links with private community schools through grants and influence over the appointment of teachers. The teaching of history and general culture was censored. Moreover, schools became the place of indoctrination and paramilitary training of adolescents. Due to the war, social life in each region was both disorganized and isolated. Movements similar to the boy scouts took off in the shadow of the militia groups. An entire generation of Lebanese, wholly ignorant of the regional and community pluralism on which the country had been founded, was thus raised and educated in a climate of ignorance and fear of the "other" and in an exaltation of the immediate group and its armed protection.

Thus, in Lebanese history, the militia order represented a new, radical stage in the culture of violence. We must ask, however, whether the militia, through the exercise of external and internal violence, was able to constitute the matrix of an authentic and original social movement. It is true that *Hizbollah* (after 1983) and the followers of General Michel Aoun (starting in 1989) succeeded in attracting the support of large, ecstatic crowds; but this was done in precise contexts and during limited periods. Apart from these mass demonstrations, we must determine whether violence played a role in the structuring of a collective identity and in the creation of a community discourse.

Ritual as Meaning

What we have discussed above - the shift from Shi'i protest to revolutionary insurrection, and the radicalization of the culture of violence through the phenomenon of militia groups - was brought about by the gradual extension of anomie to the society at large and its penetration into the very core of social relations. In other words, Lebanese society, especially Shi'i society, suffered a brutal loss of direction. It lost its spatial compass and its familiar environment as a result of the sudden transplantation, often in tragic circumstances, from villages to the capital. Society also lost its economic bearings: the new urban majority was on a path not of social promotion but rather one of descent into proletarian poverty. The relation of protection/submission that once tied it to the traditional elites was now broken. And if the new city dwellers enjoyed more freedom, they were also more vulnerable. Finally, society failed to reconcile itself with the state because the state failed to integrate the country's peripheral populations, even less so the Shi'a.[97] The state would, in any case, soon collapse utterly. This destabilization occurred in a context of double undoing of traditional social structures. First, students and intellectuals in Beirut were jolted by the student protests all over the world in May 1968. In Lebanon, as elsewhere, the *désenchantement du monde* provoked a crisis of moral and philosophical values, and with it a challenge to the past and all tradition. Second, the ravages of the war, and the daily sight of death, had the effect of alienating people from the ordinary rules of behaviour,[98] opening the despairing prospect of having "no future" where the worst becomes possible.

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[97] Contrary to another rural community, the Maronites, who succeeded in investing in the state through the modern Kata'ib Party.

[98] This has been strongly expressed in novels such as **Al-mustabidd** ("The tyrant") by Rachid al-Daif, dar Ibn Rushd, Beirut, 1983.

In order to reverse the relations of exclusion and reconnect the broken links between society and its own past and future, the emancipatory movement reconstructed a collective identity through a discourse of both rupture and totality: rupture with the "others" - that is, the other communities - as a way of strengthening the internal cohesion of the group; and rupture with traditional politics and with the community-based state. At the same time, the discourse called for a total revolutionary change that would go beyond politics and reach into every aspect of community life, including the metaphysical domain.

From the middle of the 1970s, Lebanese emancipatory movements showed a clear preference for religious discourse, as opposed to the secular discourse of leftist parties. This religious discourse rapidly took off in the wake of the Iranian revolution of 1979. The Lebanese Shi'a was not the only community affected by this phenomenon. It was observable elsewhere in the Middle East: in Israel's Jewish society, among those Christian Maronites of Lebanon attracted by fundamentalist movements as well as among the Sunni population of a district of Tripoli during the war.[99] In Tripoli, the French sociologist Michel Seurat (who would die in a *Jihâd islâmî* prison in 1985) studied the trajectory of a group tightly-knit by local, familial and community solidarity and traditionally in conflict with other neighbouring groups. Seurat observed that this group had altered the register of its mobilizing discourse according to changes in the regional context and dominant ideologies over three decades, thus advocating, successively, independentist, pro-Third World, Pan-Arab, Marxist and revolutionary pro-Palestinian doctrine. However, each of these different allegiances was superficial and ephemeral due to the external character of European ideologies in relation to Lebanon's segmented society, on which the nation-state model had been brutally imposed. None of these ideologies met the defensive and identity-related needs of the group, or its collective aspirations in a hostile environment. Finally, in the 1980s, at a time when it was waging open war against pro-Syrian militants in a rival district, the group gathered behind the leadership of a local fundamentalist divine, shaykh Sha'ban, and became an active supporter of Islamism and the Islamic state.

This phenomenon can be likened to a "return to the religious" - as the famous orientalist Bernard Lewis called it - which could be observed among the protestors of the disenfranchised regions of Baalbak-Hermel, South Lebanon and the southern suburb of Beirut. For these populations, Islamism - that is to say, the mobilization of the Muslim religion for political aims - offered two advantages which explained its success as a cement for community cohesion and as the best means of liberation at a time of crisis. First of all, Islam, if not as a faith at least as a culture, furnishes a code of mobilization that is directly accessible to Muslim societies. Islamism, contrary to secular and progressive ideologies that borrow categories from an alien culture, takes its moral categories, its symbols and its vision of the world from a religious universe familiar to all members of the Muslim community, even those who have put some distance between themselves and the Muslim faith and its authorities.

Islamism also portrays itself as a universalism, rival of the dominant universalism associated with democracy, the market and the rule of law. The ambition of Islamism, eminently political in nature, is the domination of both the state and society through the denunciation of past failures of regimes in Muslim countries. This tactic is aimed at depriving politics of an autonomous space separate from private life and religion. Rejecting the contingent and cynical nature of politics, Islamism instead offers a religious

[99] M. Seurat, "Le quartier de Bâb et-Tebbaneh à Tripoli (Liban): Etude d'une 'asabiyya urbaine", in CERMOC (ed.), **Mouvements communautaires et espaces urbains au Machreq**, CERMOC, Beirut, 1985.

alternative which is both immanent and moral. With little regard for serious historical and theological thinking, Islamism affirms that there can be no separation of religion and politics in Islam, no pluralism, and no public debate open to contradictory views. Islamism thus escapes the contradictions of modernity and the tensions between the state and civil society through a holistic conception of the *umma* (Muslim community) based on a series of transcendental certainties that serve as guiding principles for political governance.

The immediacy and globality of this system of belief reveal the totalitarian tendency that is inherent in Islamist movements. It is a frequent tendency not only among radical opposition movements, but also among those Islamist parties which have succeeded in gaining power - even if they have been hampered by the irreducible character of the *sharî'a* (the religious law) to any political rule. This immediacy and globality have had the effect of rendering incomparably effective the mythic and metaphysical discourse of the emancipatory movements. Thus for a community in crisis, like the Lebanese Shi'a, the enunciation of a religious discourse constitutes a veritable rite of passage.

The paradigm of Kerbala

A number of social and historical variables can help explain the central role of dramatic, and often violent, religious ritual in the collective experience of the Lebanese Shi'a during the war. We have already discussed the blocked community-based political system and the devaluing of secular ideologies during this period. And we have mentioned the centuries of persecution inflicted on the Shi'a by the dominant Sunnis, followed by their marginalization in Lebanon under the French mandate and after independence. It must also be recalled that the Palestinian resistance movement had an enormous impact on Lebanon after 1970, as did the Iranian revolution in 1979, when the new Islamic Republic of Iran sponsored a propaganda and mobilization campaign directed at the Lebanese Shi'i community, which is, along with the Shi'a in Iraq, one of the largest Shi'i communities in the Arab world.

Other factors, apart from these sociological and historical ones, are more closely related to the social organization and practices of the Shi'i religion. The distinction between Shi'ism and the majority Sunni Islam, which appeared during the very first decades of Islam, has little to do with religious doctrine. At times of political peace and common mobilization against the non-Muslim world, the distinction becomes practically imperceptible, all the more so that the Shi'a resort to dissimulation *(kitmân)* in order to preserve their security while at the same time protecting their most intimate convictions. What distinguishes the Shi'a from the Sunnis is mainly the question of the legitimacy of political power. The Shi'a recognize the legitimacy only of members of the Prophet's family, and hence consider as usurpers the political leaders since the death of the last of the Prophet's direct descendants. This power vacuum has transferred authority to Shi'i divines (*mollah*s and *mujtahid*s), leading to the emergence of a clerical class which puts a great deal of emphasis on ritual. Indeed, the symbolic power and material resources of these religious figures depend on their ability effectively to organize and supervise religious ritual.[100]

It was therefore around very specific religious rites (not, for example, common rites such as the fast of Ramadan) that the recomposition of the Shi'i community's identity and its political mobilization crystallized. Among these rites, the *Ashûra* ritual constituted the *topos* of the Shi'a's collective experience. Shi'i Muslims, and among them those who have been settled in Lebanon since the Middle Ages, have commemorated their saints and

[100] F. Khuri, "Secularization and 'ulama' networks among Sunni and Shi'i religious officials", in H. Barakat (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 92.

heroes (Ali, their first *imâm* ; Fatima, his wife and the daughter of Muhammad, etc.) for centuries, and the great dates of Shi'ism since its founding. But the *Ashûra* mourning (*ta'ziyya)* and the ritual commemorating the murder of Husayn, the second son of Ali, by the cavalry of the Omayyad caliph Yazid at Kerbala on the tenth day of the month of *muharrâm* of the year 61 (680 A.D.), was introduced (or reintroduced?) in the city of Nabatiyyah in Jabal Amil by Iranian immigrants as recently as the late nineteenth century. The ritual wasn't widely practiced in the region until after 1936, with the drafting of a corpus in Arabic.[101] It later spread to Tyre, Sidon, Bint Jbayl, and also to Baalbak and the Biqaa, and finally to Shiyah and Ghobayri in the suburbs of Beirut[102] following the dispersion of the Shi'i community.

The *Ashûra* ritual gathers members of the community in assemblies of lamentation (*majlis ta'ziyya*), either in private houses or in meeting halls (*husayniyya),* where they hear narrative tales of the battle of Kerbala. The events of the Kerbala drama are even represented on a stage, with non-professional actors playing the different parts. Each meeting is followed by a religious harangue. On the tenth day of the ceremony, a procession of self-flagellants garbed in white marches through the streets. There are scenes of self-inflicted violence in which penitents, their heads shaved and wearing headbands inscribed with verses of the Koran, beat themselves about the head with daggers and swords to the point of drawing blood from wounds that occasionally prove fatal.[103] The ritual features a mixture of practices linked to Shi'i Islam in Lebanon and pre-Islamic funerary rites also practiced by Christians in the region.[104]

Although an "invented tradition",[105] this meta-history of the events of the battle of Kerbala offered to contemporary Shi'i society non-temporal themes, particularly of corruption and oppression of the power, which triumphs over the true believers. It has constituted ever since an inexhaustible wellspring of rhetorical devices that can be interpreted variously according to the context.[106] For modern historians, Husayn seems to have been the victim of his own political blindness, for he failed to fully appreciate that his own followers were weaker than those of the Caliph.[107] But the collective Shi'i conscience has nonetheless forged over the centuries a different interpretation: while marching towards certain death, Husayn was choosing martyrdom over injustice and the usurpation of his power. At the same time, he was exposing the treason of his own community, *shî'at Ali* - the "party of Ali" - which had abandoned him at the decisive moment of the battle.

The interest expressed in the *Ashûra* ritual by the traditional elites of South Lebanon and of the Biqa' grew during the 1930s, when the rites were patronized by the region's great families, particularly the As'ads and the Usayrans. Directed at deviants within the community, but also at foreign powers (at the time the French mandate), the ritual was an

101 F. Maatouk, **La représentation de la mort de l'imam Hussein**, Institut des sciences sociales, Beirut, 1974.

102 F. Khuri, **From village...**, *op. cit.,* p. 182.

103 See the yearly (every twelfth lunar month) report in **al-Hayât** from 4 February 1974 to 20 October 1983.

104 H. Kassatly, "Local traditions and Islamic traditions: The dynamics of a conflict seen through the study of specific case: Funeral rites in a Shi'ite village in South Lebanon", **Islam and Christian Muslim relations**, N° 2 (1), 1991.

105 As suggested in E. Hobsbawm (ed.), **The invention of tradition**, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1983.

106 M. Fischer, **Iran: From religious dispute to revolution**, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, 1980.

107 M. Shaban, **Islamic history: A new interpretation**, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1971, p. 91, as quoted in Y. Gonzalez-Quijano, "Les interprétations d'un rite: Célébration de la 'Achoura au Liban", **Maghreb-Machrek** N° 115, 1987, p. 7.

instrument of religious legitimation of the domination by these traditional elites. The ritual was all the more instrumental given the fact that it transmitted from one generation to the next the guilt-inducing message contained in the story of a whole community that had betrayed its leader. This guilt complex was, it would seem, reinforced by the patriarchal social structures in Shi'i rural areas and by the frustrations engendered by sexual repression.[108] Confronted at the same time by interdictions and adversity (economic and political), the Shi'i population turned on itself and, through this self-punishing rite, neutralized any potential aggressivity. The function of the ritual was therefore to "appease intestinal violence and to prevent conflicts from breaking out".[109] While the local Shi'i elites were, in any case, protected by their genealogical and religious legitimacy, the *Ashûra* ritual took the form of a rite of social resignation and submission.

At the beginning of the 1970s, when the Movement of the Deprived emerged as an organized force, the *Ashûra* ceremony underwent a spectacular transformation: first, in its geographical dissemination; and, second, in the new way in which it was interpreted. In its transformed version, the climax of the *Ashûra* ceremony occurs on the day when the penitential cortege circulates through the village or urban district while the crowd, accompanying the self-flagellants, chants "*Allah akbar"* as well as the names of the great Shi'i *imâm*s as they follow a procession above which huge black and green banners are held aloft. Culminating in an intense moment of emotion and unity, the cortege becomes a demonstration of power, not only by the number of participants but also because the movement of the procession traces and sets the ever-expanding limits of Shi'i territory. Over the past fifteen years, participation in the performance of the *Ashûra* rite has grown from seven locations to twenty-five,[110] and several hundred thousand people take part in the ceremony. Not only has the rite spread through the new districts "squatted" by the Shi'a, such as Bir el-Abed and Khaldeh in the southern suburbs of Beirut, but in 1985 the ceremony flooded into the very center of the city around the Zuqaq el-Blat mosque. While it had previously been geographically peripheral and politically marginal, the *Ashûra* ceremony has become a central event in Lebanese society.

The new interpretation of the ritual - its actualization and inversion - constituted an even more dramatic change as of 1974. In the particularly tense atmosphere of social mobilization against the government and community bosses, the *Ashûra* celebrations were transformed from a penitent rite to a revolutionary one, from a chorus of lamentations to one of imprecations, from an act of submission to one of rebellion. In Yater (Jabal Amil), *sayyid* Musa Sadr presided over the ceremonies that year, exhorting the overcharged crowd - which was chanting "revolution, revolution, oh *imâm* !" - "not to consider the tears and the participation at a funeral as a substitute for action, or as a way of avoiding anger and vengeance, or an excuse for not taking more constructive actions.[111]" It was not merely a cathartic discourse or a symbolic call to arms, but an unequivocal battle cry *hic et nunc.* The following day, Sadr even participated in the creation of a committee "against the high cost of living" at Nabatiyyah, and on February 6 marched at the head of a huge demonstration in Sidon. For the Shi'i community, the days of civil strife that followed throughout the South were nothing less than the extension of the *Ashûra* ceremony, without a hiatus or change in tone. Social ritual had

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108 R. Rizkallah, **Contribution à une approche psycho-sociologique d'un rite chez les Chi'ites du Liban Sud**, Doctoral dissertation presented at the University of Paris VII, 1977.

109 R. Girard, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

110 Y. Gonzalez-Quijano, *op. cit.*, p. 10. The number of *ta'ziyya* decreased in 1978-1982. During these years, the Lebanese Shi'a were troubled by the disappearance of Musa Sadr in Libya in 1978 and the replacement of Husayn al-Husayni by Nabih Berri as the Secretary General of *Amal* in 1980.

111 J. Aucagne,"L'imam Moussa Sadr et la communauté chiite", **Travaux et Jours** N° 53, 1974.

thus been transformed into political mobilization. "Through the enactment of an important event of the past, the 'now' of a religious community [had been] extended back into the past and forward into the future."[112]

Rid of its quietist interpretation, the ritual furnished a new paradigm of Shi'i mobilization during the war - the "paradigm of Kerbala". The community, as a response to the non-temporal violence of which it was a victim, sanctified its own violence. Throughout the annual religious cycles, other less significant commemorations were added to the *Ashûra* ritual, such as that of Zayn el-Abidin (the son of Husayn), the day of Jerusalem (the third sacred city of Islam), or the anniversary of Musa Sadr's disappearance in 1978. The ritual was also embellished by techniques borrowed from the Iranian tradition, such as the presence of a limousine cloaked in black, the wearing of shrouds by demonstrators, and skirmishes on the fringes of the cortege. From that point on, the annual *Ashûra* ritual marked the most intense moment in community mobilization: in October 1983, anti-Israeli riots broke out during the procession in Nabatiyyah, resulting in a dozen deaths; the following year, the Lebanese army was forced to retreat from the streets of West Beirut during the march; in September 1985, a united cortege of dignitaries from both the *Amal* movement and *Hizbollah* closed the ceremonies; while a year later there was no similar show of unity, as *Hizbollah* militants disrupted the *Amal*-organized ceremonies at Nabatiyyah.

The creation of a community discourse

For the Shi'i community, the *Ashûra* ritual did not constitute an experience separate from daily life. On the contrary, it penetrated the very core of daily existence. Through the actualization of the past, the ceremony breathed a new dynamic into community spirit.

Each of the episodes of aggression, destruction, exodus, attack, and armed reprisal that successively occurred during the war became the actualization of the misfortune, suffering, and oppression of the followers of Ali *(shî'at Ali)*. It is not that history was repeating itself, from the birth of Islam in the seventh century to the Lebanese war in the twentieth century, but rather that time was abolished. Through non-temporal associations, every real event in the present was linked to a founding event of the mythic period of the early years of the House of the Prophet.

Thus, in the testimony of the local village people of Jabal Amil who witnessed conflicts between Palestinians and Israelis, and later between Lebanese resistance fighters and the Israelis on their territory, recollections of punitive acts, bombardments, imprisonment and forced exodus are precise as regards recent events, but mixed with evocations of mythic tales stretching back to the birth of Shi'ism.[113] When, for example, the wife of shaykh Raghib Harb, who was assassinated in 1983, recounts that she was pregnant when being beaten by Israeli soldiers, she is also reproducing a traditional tale of the wife of the *imâm* who was physically beaten by the enemies of Shi'ism.[114] The tale of this traumatic event becomes even more authentic with each telling. Transgressions, both physical (the searches and destruction of houses) and bodily (the beating of a pregnant woman, the murder of a shaykh), acquire an immediate symbolic density through their non-temporality.

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[112] M. Ayoub, **Redemptive suffering in Islam**, Mouton, The Hague, 1978, especially Chapter 5.2, pp. 148-158, "The *ta'zîyah* celebration: Its growth and general characteristics."

[113] M. Ghânim, **Al-mantiqat l-junûbiyya l-muhtalla. Qadhiyyat sha'b wa-ardh**, Dar al-Nasr, Beirut, 1991.

[114] **Pasdar e-Islam**, "Report from South Lebanon", August-September 1984, pp. 56-59. Article translated from Persian into English by R. Dehdashti (Frei Universität, Berlin).

Shi'i experience during the war, however, was not only that of violence suffered, of victimhood. It was also a sacrificial violence in the name of the community's salvation. The combatant who died in a skirmish or during a terrorist attack was not a victim, and even less so a "scapegoat" - to use René Girard's term[115] - sacrificed by his own society. He was rather a *shahîd* , or martyr, as well as a *shâhid*, or willing witness. The exemplary and religious nature of such acts has been documented in numerous letters and diaries kept by young men killed in combat and reprinted or cited by the militant press,[116] or in confessions recorded on video and aired on television. The goal of the *shahîd* is not so much military success and the defeat of the enemy, but rather the exemplary effect of his violent experience and the mystic fusion of the Community of the faithful with the heros of the past. The risks involved in this sort of act are considerable, however. For the paroxystic *shahîd*'s gesture - sacrificing efficacity for the purely symbolic - could lead the emancipatory movement to inversion (in the sense used by Michel Wieviorka)[117] and he could find himself rejected by his own community.

With this heavy emphasis on the theme of sacrifice, the fabric of Shi'i community life became a web of unifying, interwoven symbols[118] which enveloped political action. These symbols were carried at first by oral discourse, essentially that of the clerics. Their politico-religious sermons, which served to contextualize violence for adherents, were laden with the evocative themes of Islam and offered up in a fiery mixture of Koranic language and Third World rhetoric - "terror of the arrogant ones" *(mustakbarîn)* ; "exploitation of the oppressed" *(mustad'afîn) ;* dictatorship of heretic, aggressive and unjust regimes. The terms "Satanic", "criminal", "dirty" were often directed at the superpowers ("super-criminals") and at Israel, which one had not only to push out of Lebanon but "wipe out of existence", or, even closer to home, at the Lebanese Forces, considered the "worst Lebanese enemy".[119]

Also a part of this ritualization of violence was the popular invention of body movements, music, decoration, and spatial organization - all of which helped enrich the new community gospel. Added to the explicit religious symbols (a globe, the Koran, and a rifle for the *Hizbollah),* the omnipresent portraits of the leaders and martyrs, the posters and banderols, and the well-planned, militia-organized processions, other gestures proved equally inventive: the renaming of streets, the erection of luminous religious symbols at night, the installation of loudspeakers from which bellowed the sermon from the previous Friday, and invocations in (of all languages) Persian. A "battle of the flags" that lasted several days in Beirut in 1988 pitted the *Amal* movement against the Druze PSP militia. Dozens of people were killed as each side attacked the other's symbols to tear them down. The identification with one's community group also encouraged people to wear an "Islamic" costume (the *jellabah),* albeit a modern jacket-like version, and to wear an

115 *op. cit.*, p. 122.

116 Such as **al-'Ahd** or **al-Shirâ'**. See also M. Shams, **Al-harakat al-islamiyya fî Lubnân**, Beirut, 1991; P. Vieille and F. Khosrovar, "Le discours populaire de la révolution iranienne", **Contemporanéité**, Vol. 2 "Entretiens", Paris, 1990.

117 M. Wieviorka, "Un outil pour l'analyse de la violence politique: La notion d'inversion", in **Etudes Polémologiques**, N° 37 1986, pp.191-213 and **E.T.A. et la violence politique au Pays Basque espagnol**, UNRISD Discussion Paper 40, l993.

118 C. Geertz, "Centers, kings and charisma: Reflections on the symbolics of power", in J. Ben-David and T. Clark (eds.), **Culture and its creators**, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 1977, p. 168.

119 "Interview with Sayyid Hasan Nasrallah, leading member of the Central council of *Hizbollah* of Lebanon", **Pasdar e-Islam**, March-April 1988, pp. 42-47 (translated from Persian into English by R. Dehdashti). See also O. Carré, "Quelques mots-clefs de Muhammad Husayn Fadlallâh", **Revue Française de science politique** N° 37 (4), 1987.

Iranian-style beard. Women, for their part, had to hide their body beneath an *'abaya*, which symbolized the rejection of Western values.[120]

The new Shi'i Islamic discourse therefore did not work as a discourse of interpretation, but one of comprehension. Ritual (in particular the *Ashûra* ceremony and the paradigm of Kerbala) dressed up every community action in symbolic attire, expressed people's social dependence, deepened the divide separating the Shi'a from other communities and thus gave meaning to communitarian violence. Ritual not only abolished temporal differences, as rite linked past to present and future by abrogating history and time, but also overcame individual differences through the dramatization of collective emotions in favour of a cultural consensus and communitarian cohesion.[121]

Back to Politics: Competition between Elites within the State

Barely three years after this wave of revolutionary fervor, the Shi'i movement began to normalize its practices and re-emphasize the legitimacy of its aims in the Lebanese political framework. *Amal* readily accepted the constitutional Taif Accord in 1989, including the dissolution of the militia groups, the dispersion of heavy artillery and the incorporation in the spring of 1991 of some of their members in the restructured Lebanese army. Within a few months in 1990 and 1991, the western hostages held by groups linked to *Hizbollah* were freed, and the spiritual guide of the radical Shi'a commented frankly that "the violence is no longer paying off for those who generated it".[122] But the most tangible sign of the normalization, or institutionalization, of the revolutionary movement was participation in the legislative elections of August and September 1992, not just by *Amal*, whose lawfulness and aspirations to share in the communitarian power have already been stressed, but also by *Hizbollah*, which finally came out in favor of the abolition of political communalism,[123] participated straightforwardly in the game of electoral alliances, and won 8 of the 27 seats reserved for the Shi'a.

The success of the communitarian movements had been partly based on a spontaneity and mysticism which made it impossibe to apply to the Shi'i movements rational analysis and the logic of interests. The weakening of these movements between 1989 and 1992 allows us to reflect *a posteriori* on the Shi'i entanglement with political violence and to detect certain factors that contributed to the apeasement of this violence, if not to the elimination of its basic causes. In the last section, still considering the case of the Shi'a in a comparative light, we will deal with the competition between elites of the community, the role of external influences - regional and international - and last but not least, with the relationship between the new Lebanese state and the revolutionary movement recently integrated into politics.

New intellectuals and ambitious mollahs

It must be recognized at the start that while the development of the Shi'i discourse community may have appeared to demolish barriers of time and social space in an inevitable and natural process, the agents of collective mobilization and competing interests were still present and active behind the scenes. The main weakness of the

120 N. Beyhum, **Espaces éclatés, espaces dominés: Etude de la recomposition des espaces publics centraux de Beyrouth de 1975 à 1990**, Doctoral dissertation, University of Lyon II, 1991, pp. 425-427.

121 D. Kertzer, **Ritual, politics and power**, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1988, pp. 48, 65-68 and 182.

122 Interview of shaykh Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah in **Arabies**, September 1992, p. 14.

123 In conformity with the Taif Accord. However, *Hizbollah* does not aim at establishing secular democracy in Lebanon but rather Islamic rule based on (Shi'i) demographic majority.

Lebanese communitarian movements was to allow the practitioners of violence to put their conflicts of interest before their collective goals: for fifteen years the Sunni urban elites remained paralysed by the rivalries of their political bosses and the Maronite warlords of "Christian Lebanon" dragged their followers into a series of fratricidal wars throughout the 1980s. As for the revolutionary Shi'a of *Amal* and *Hizbollah*, each was inspired by the ambition of supplanting the traditional "feudal" elites as well as the secular political parties in order to become (or appear to be) the exclusive representative of their community.[124] But by examining the social origins of the leaders of the two main Shi'i movements and following their individual trajectories, we will see that personal interests and leadership rivalries were competing with the revolutionary ideal. This explains why, in the rivalry of the two movements, the logic of bargaining would finally prevail over the discourse of revolution to overturn the old order in Lebanon.

Sometimes referred to as the new intellectuals of Islam,[125] the leaders of *Amal* and *Hizbollah* seem to be a more reliable source of understanding of the movements than the grassroots militants, who constitute an amorphous mass whose loyalities and affiliations often proved volatile.[126] They are often more telling than the charismatic personalities - such as *sayyid* Musa Sadr, shaykh Muhammad Mahdi Shams ed-Din (the Vice President of the SISC), and above all shaykh Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah,[127] whose influence extends over the whole revolutionary movement and even beyond it. Within this new generation of revolutionary cadres bound to replace the traditional community elites and their scions, several differences appear - in age, geographical and social origin and education - which help to explain the divisions and open conflict inside the Shi'i movement, mainly between *Amal* and *Hizbollah*.

From the moment of its creation, *Amal* was controlled by the new crop of university-educated Shi'a who had risen above their rural origins through schooling in Beirut or abroad since the late 1950s. Among its leading figures, more were from modest origins (Dawud Dawud, Ayyub Humayyed) than from major Shi'i clans (Husayn Husayni; Muhammad Beydun of Tyre, who has been a member of the *Amal* politburo since 1986, was made a minister in 1990, and nominated a Member of Parliament in 1991). Those originating from Southern Lebanon outnumbered by ten those from the Biqa'. Some of the cadres of the movement chose the route of the civil service - and even the army (Aqif Haydar) - and indeed their influence was partly based on their legal powers. Others took advantage of the economic growth in the 1960s and rapidly got rich in the private sector, notably in commerce and real estate in Western Africa and in the Persian Gulf. Returning to Lebanon, they made important land purchases in their areas of origin. In any event, they established relations with the business and banking bourgeoisie of other Lebanese communities (Husayn Husayni) in Beirut. But the most emblematic profession of the new managerial class of *Amal* was the law: several members of the *Amal* politburo were

[124] Notwithstanding that in the late 1980s, 45 per cent of the Shi'a would rather have declared traditional or secular allegiances, according to H. Kashan, **Antiwestern perceptions among Lebanese Shii college students**, Doctoral dissertation presented to the American University of Beirut, 1987.

[125] O. Roy, "Les nouveaux intellectuels islamistes: Essai d'approche philosophique", in G. Kepel and Y. Richard (eds.), **Intellectuels et militants de l'islam contemporain**, le Seuil, Paris, 1990, p. 281.

[126] Interesting portraits of grassroots militants are to be found in the militant press as well as in R. Norton, **Amal...**, *op. cit.*, p. 91; R. Fisk, **Pity the nation: Lebanon at war**, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990, pp. 562-580; G. Delafon, *op. cit.*, pp. 112 and 174-182.

[127] Ayatollah *sayyid* Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah was born in Najaf (Iraq) in 1935 to a family originating from South Lebanon. He was taught in the school of Ayatollah Kho'i (who died in 1992) but became closer to Ayatollah Khomeyni in 1982. Officially not a member of *Hizbollah*, he exerts a strong influence on the movement through his numerous writings and preachings. Notwithstanding his continuous denials, western scholars tend to rely exclusively on him when they discuss *Hizbollah.* See M. Kramer, "Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah", **Orient** N° 26 (2), 1985.

lawyers, including its Secretary general since 1982, Nabih Berri. Another important characteristic of the *Amal* leadership was the limited number of religious figures. For example, from 1974 to 1978, only three other religious men (all three from Beirut's southern suburbs) among a total of 17 members[128] were included in the headquarters of Musa Sadr. Religious figures were constantly in a minority position within the movement's politburo of 20 members.

On the whole, the "new clerics"[129] of *Amal* were for the most part secular clerics or "frustrated intellectuals", whose ambitions extended in accord with the clan-based and communitarian Lebanese system but who were unable to achieve the social integration to which they aspired. Clearly, the discourse of Musa Sadr in defence of the disenfranchised had been for them a call to action, bringing them to the vanguard of the Shi'i community in spite of their internal rivalries and conflicts of interest. In 1987, for example, conflicts erupted between various local chiefs of the movement - Dawud Dawud, Mahmud Faqi, Hasan Hashim, Aql Hamiya, and Mustapha Dirani - provoking a series of attacks and ambushes and costing the movement tens of members. At the same time, among the top officials of the movement there was a growing temptation to make deals with the leaders of other sects in order to gain access to positions of power - whether as a minister, in the bureaucracy, or an MP seat - or even as a way of entering the lucrative business world. Thus the participation of *Amal* in "the national reconciliation governments" in the years following 1984 allowed an entire generation of ambitious executives to occupy positions of responsibility in public administration, and to reap the benefits of these positions in order to build up a political clientele among the disenfranchised Shi'i populations, recalling the behaviour of their "feudal" predecessors. The Superior Council of the South, for example, manages millions of dollars intended for reconstruction projects in this occupied and underdeveloped area. Since 1980, these public funds have been politically controlled by *Amal* whose leaders are the first - but not the only - ones to benefit from them. Indeed, fifteen years after the creation of *Amal*, one expert has described the movement's "incompetence, corruption, and arrogance".[130]

Against the orientation of *Amal*, marked by strong personal rivalries and by a lack of cohesion, one could set the ideological virulence - both doctrinaire and moral - and above all the social trajectory of the executives of the rival *Hizbollah* movement.[131] Even if, after 1989, *Hizbollah* tended to take on the structures of a "Leninist" party by holding congresses (the first one in Teheran in November of that year) and by electing politburo members as well as a Secretary general (shaykh Subhi al-Tufayli at that time),[132] the movement was almost exclusively dominated by high-ranking religious figures with little regard for such political activities.[133] These men were responsible for the organization of religious ritual and social and political education, mainly through their Friday prayer sermons (*khutba).* With a single exception - that of a scholar and teacher from the Biqa'

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128 S. Nasr, *op. cit.* , p. 113.

129 The word is O. Roy's in G. Kepel and Y. Richard, *op. cit.*

130 R. Norton, "Lebanon: The internal conflict and the Iranian connection", in J. Esposito (ed.), **The Iranian revolution**, Florida International University Press, Miami, 1990.

131 The composition of the *majlis al-shûra* is kept secret. See S. al-Husayni, "Hizbollah: Haraka 'askariyya am siyasiyya am diniyya?", **al-Shirâ'**, 15 March 1986, pp. 14-21.

132 A. Abul Khalil, "Ideology and practice of Hizballah in Lebanon: Islamization of Leninist organization principles", **Middle Eastern studies** N° 27 (3), 1991.

133 F. Khuri, "Secularization and 'ulama' networks among Sunni and Shi'i religious officials", in H. Barakat (ed.), *op. cit.*

who himself belonged to an honorable clan and to the House of the Prophet[134] - the 12 (8 after 1991) members of the *majlis al-shûra* (consultative council) which governed *Hizbollah* in Lebanon were shaykhs born around 1950, most of them in the regions of Baalbak and Zahlah. They had studied in Qom in Iran and in Najaf in Iraq, at the time Khomeyni lived there in exile, where they had stayed several years. Some of them had secular qualifications, sometimes in the military field: for example, shaykh Abbas Musawi,[135] who was elected Secretary general of the movement in April 1991, was both head of a religious studies center in Baalbak and in charge of the movement's security apparatuses. But generally speaking, these *Hizbollah* officials shared the Shi''i belief that secular political power had been illegitimate since the disappearance of the last of the line of *Imam*-s in the twelfth century, and considered as legitimate Ayatollah Khomeyni's proclamation of the *vilâyat al-faqîh* - the devolution of political power towards the "just jurisconsult". Such ideological positions established within *Hizbollah* a type of eschatological aspiration, a vision of power prone to totalitarianism, and a tendency to rely on violent political techniques. While proclaiming their "commitment to the rule of Islam"[136] in Lebanon and to "terror against the enemies of Allah", *Hizbollah* leaders of the *majlis al-shûra* were demanding in effect the control of the earthly city, both in the public sphere and in the private lives of Muslims. Indeed, the reinforcement of their legitimacy in the Shi'i community at the expense of *Amal* depended on their refusal to make political compromises, and on the sanctification of acts of violence, including violence against civilians, perpetrated in the name of an Islamic "imperative".[137]

Rapidly however, the competition between *Amal* and *Hizbollah* became less a conflict between a revolutionary project and a religious program and more a contest for control over the Shi'i community[138] and, through it due to demographic factors, over Lebanon as a whole. From 1985 to 1989, the confrontation between both movements took the shape of an unrelenting territorial advance from *Hizbollah* areas at the expense of *Amal*-held ones.. First established in the Baalbak region where it enjoyed the support of some 2,000 Iranian *pasdars* who had arrived via Syria after 1980, *Hizbollah* quickly expanded in the southern suburbs of Beirut, the *dahiyya*, starting from Bir el-Abed where shaykh Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah lived and preached. In this zone, Islamic organizations made great headway. In February 1988, one of the first territorial confrontations between the *Amal* and *Hizbollah* movements broke out. Each militia group had about 5,000 combatants at its disposal in West Beirut and in the *dahiyya*. To emerge victorious, *Hizbollah* took advantage of the fact that *Amal* was still suffering from its calamitous battle against the Palestinians. Also, *Hizbollah* cleverly lured away *Amal* militiamen by offering them between US$ 150 and 200 a month, which was roughly double what most militiamen were earning at the time. Some 300 militants left *Amal* and joined the pro-*Hizbollah* "Islamic resistance" in the South, under the leadership of Mustapha Dirani. Ultimately, *Hizbollah* succeeded in unifying the southern Shi'i suburbs of Beirut by

[134] Husayn Musawi, born in Nabishit in 1948, is a *sayyid*, a scion of the Prophet's family. A member of the SISC since 1978, he left *Amal* in June 1982 and founded *Amal islami*, "as an integral part of the *Hizbollah* 'nation' (*umma*)". See his interview in **al-Nahâr al-'arabi l-duwali**, 10-16 June 1986.

[135] Abbas Musawi died in February 1992 when his car was bombed by the Israeli airforce. He was replaced by *sayyid* Hasan Nasrallah, born in 1960 to a poor family of the Jabal Amil. Nasrallah went to study Islamic law in Najaf in 1976 but was expelled because of his anti-Ba'thi activities. He is among the founders of *Hizbollah*.

[136] **Nass al-risala al-maftuha allati wajjaha Hizb Allah ila al-mustad'afin fi Lubnan wal-'alam** (text of an open letter addressed by *Hizbollah* to the downtrodden in Lebanon and in the world), 1 February 1985, translated in R. Norton, **Amal...**, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

[137] See M. Kramer, "The moral logic...", *op. cit.*

[138] A.L. Schbley, "Resurgent religious terrorism: A study of some of the Lebanese Shi'a contemporary terrorism", **Terrorism,** Vol. 12, 1989, uses a sophisticated mathematic model; however only 60 "non-randomly and non-proportionally selected" cases were used.

defeating militarily Haret al-Hreik and other *Amal* strongholds. Several hundred combatants were killed on both sides before Berri, admitting defeat, proclaimed the dissolution of the *Amal* movement in the *dahiyya* in June 1988.[139] The following phase of the conflict unravelled in the Iqlim al-Tuffah, east of Nabatiyyah and in the Iqlim al-Kharroub, south of Nabatiyyah. Flaunting the accord signed in January 1989, *Hizbollah* took control of two important villages, Jbaa and Jarju', and some 400 of its militiamen made a foothold in the South where the movement would soon become the principal force against the Israeli army and its local militia - the Army of South Lebanon. At that time, many *Amal* militants, on the other hand, chose to give up the armed struggle, even against Israel, and accepted the demobilization set out in the Taif Accord.

The competition between *Amal* and *Hizbollah* for authority over the Shi'i community had the clear effect of prolonging and escalating the level of political violence, not only within Shi'i regions but also between the Shi'is and other allied and enemy Lebanese groups, particularly in West Beirut. It also contributed to the intensification of resistance to Israeli and pro-Israeli forces in the south of the country, as the two groups tried to outdo each other with military operations of increasing audacity. But for several reasons, this competition, which culminated in *Hizbollah*'s victory and *Amal*'s renunciation of political violence, also had the ultimate effect of directing the emancipatory movement back to the realm of conventional political rationality. First, the conflict had repeatedly exposed the fragility of the discourse community, particularly in localist groups capable of shifting their loyalty from one movement to the other when their material interests or, more importantly, their security were at stake. Eventually violence lost its previous function as the ultimate symbolic expression of the community - a function which it had held when mobilizing against internal oppression and foreign occupation and for the actualization of a just Islamic state, but which had become an obstacle to the achievement of these goals. Second, in order to use victory to its advantage, *Hizbollah* had to exchange its eschatological aims for the concrete objectives of the Lebanese and regional scene, or at least promote the latter and relegate the former to a distant and improbable future. Faced with this necessity, the members of the *majlis as-shûra*, particularly Abbas Musawi and his successor Hasan Nasrallah, utilized the unexpected doctrinal flexibility and negotiating talents of the doctors of theology and Islamic law. They showed that they were as capable as the *Amal* functionaries of taking part in the subtleties of the Lebanese power game. Finally, the most spectacular effect of the violent confrontation within the Shi'i camp was the shift from its hostile discourse of inversion to one of participation on the forefront of the Lebanese political debate.

The impact of regional normalization

The regional and international contexts had decisive influences on the Shi'i movement, all the more so because its universalist discourse and its entrenchment in the conflict zone of South Lebanon implicated it directly in the key problems of the Middle East. But the project and the strategy of the Shi'i emancipatory movement were differently affected by changes on the international scene with the end of the Cold War and the Gulf War, and by changes on the regional scene with the Arab-Israeli Madrid negotiations.

Although the collapse of the Soviet Union had no direct impact on the Shi'i movement itself, it accelerated the return of Syria to the international "order" and forced its leader to renounce altogether both Syria's quest for "strategic parity" with Israel and its claim to support and control the various subversive organizations of the Near East.[140] For Lebanon

[139] Interviews with Nabih Berri and Muhammad Husayn Fadlallah, **Al-Nahâr al-'arabi l-duwali**, N° 609, 9-15 January 1989, pp. 8-12.

[140] E. Picard, "The Middle East after the Cold War and the Gulf War", in Z. Laïdi (ed.), **Meaning and power after the Cold War**, Berg, New York, 1993.

this meant that, with the tacit agreement of the United States and Saudi Arabia, Damascus would take charge of the Lebanese crisis and try to keep it under control, particularly by avoiding serious confrontation on the frontier with Israel. The "new world order" reorganized around American leadership during the Gulf War confirmed this inclination so that in Fall 1990, Syria succeeded both in crushing General Michel Aoun's rebellion and in imposing a cease-fire accord between *Amal* and *Hizbollah*. Since then, all the political and military forces of Lebanon have submitted to the authority of Damascus, an authority confirmed by the Taif Accord of 1989 and by the Syrian-Lebanese Friendship Treaty of May 1991. Having put an end to the Lebanese Civil War, Syria has gone on to encourage all the militia groups to surrender their arms, demobilize their forces, and dissolve themselves or transform themselves into political parties.

The Gulf War had the effect of accelerating the changes in the Islamic Republic of Iran which had begun after its defeat by Iraq in 1988 and the death of Khomeyni in 1989. Without asserting that militant Islamism exported by Iran had everywhere given way to a conservative neo-fundamentalism dominated by Saudi Arabia, one can nevertheless observe that Teheran has distanced itself somewhat from the Shi'i movements in Lebanon. Not only did its subsidies diminish, but the ruling circles of *Amal* and *Hizbollah* resented Teheran's hesitations and the conflicts between its moderates and radicals. This tendency has been confirmed since the end of the Gulf War, with the Arabian Peninsula and Central Asia being Iran's foremost concerns, far ahead of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the problem in Southern Lebanon. From that time on the waning of Iranian influence on the Lebanese Shi'a movements has been reflected through the rapid denouement of the Western hostage crisis and President Rafsanjani's statements supporting peace in Lebanon and the observance of the Taif Accord.

Progress in the Arab-Israeli negotiations which began in 1991 might also encourage the renunciation of armed struggle and the resumption of civilian political discourse in Lebanon. In normalizing the interstate relations in the region and initiating a solution to the Palestinian problem, this process might help solve the issue of Lebanese sovereignty (full and complete recognition by Syria) and territorial integrity (the evacuation of the South by Israel). The "totalizing" rhetoric which helped animate the Shi'i movements by linking the foreign menace with interior enemies would thus lose its mobilizing power, as the strategy of armed struggle would lose its legitimacy. Yet it must be noted that as of the beginning of 1993, *Hizbollah* alone among all the Lebanese militia groups continues to refuse the "logic of peace" set into motion by the Madrid negotiations. This exception is not due to *Hizbollah*'s peculiar character (as its leaders claim) as a genuine popular resistance rather than a mere militia group, nor to its strength (with the return of security and the falling off of Iranian aid, its manpower and weapons supplies have been cut back considerably). Paradoxically, its exceptional role is tenable largely because it plays into the implicit strategy of the regional actors, Syria and Israel, who use the costly and ineffectual operations of the "religious resistance" to their advantage in negotiations punctuated with periodic threats, escalations of violence, and reprisals. Finally, while the operations of the "religious resistance" in Southern Lebanon have lost the spontaneous character and deep popular roots which they had at the beginning of the 1980's, they have continued to slow the passage of the Shi'i actors from the strategy of violence to that of bargaining. The armed resistance against Israel continues not only, but mainly, because it constitutes a central building block of *Hizbollah*'s legitimacy on the regional and Lebanese scenes. At the same time, it allows the leadership to postpone reforms necessitated by the new policy of political participation. In any case, it confirms the ultimate primacy of the regional dimension in the Lebanese power play.

The restoration of the state and the future of Shi'i violence

Even if competition for leadership within the Shi'i movement and external manipulations have influenced the reorientation towards political negotiation of the emancipatory movement, what ultimately counts is the nature of the newly revived Lebanese state, and the position it offers to the armed movements which dominated the country for the last fifteen years.

With the Taif Accords and the birth of the Second Lebanese Republic, the state reappears as both a participant in and an object of political reconstruction in Lebanon. However justified the criticisms of the legality and constitutionality of the installation of the new state may be, they are secondary to the necessity of bringing back the state and formulating a new social pact. The main reason for the underlying legitimacy of the new Lebanon is that the birth of the Second Republic responded to a general desire for a powerful and unifying state. The trauma of the civil war helped shape in the minds of the Lebanese an idealist image of the state, very different from the ultra-liberal state of the 1950s and 1960s. This image was the opposite of what the Lebanese had suffered under the domination of the militia groups. The state is "the boundary which secures all boundaries".[141] It defines domestic law and order, brings security to the borders, encourages economic prosperity and supervises social redistribution of wealth; its interlocutors are the elites of civil society, not the powerbrokers of the communitarian hierarchies. In disarming the militia groups and recovering its legitimate monopoly on the use of force, the state protects society against the two dangers, fragmentation and domination, which historically threatened it. In Lebanon, most importantly, only the state can guarantee the restoration of a unifying social order in the national space, since the text of the Taif Accord explicitly sets out the end of political communalism and the adoption of democratic secularism. This image of the state is shared by the majority of civilians in all regions and all communities, including those who remained silent under the militia terror, and is especially strong among civil servants. It is represented even in the new parliament of 1992. Though apparently unrepresentative of the population, more than a quarter of its members, particularly the Shi'i members, are, far from being puppets, independent personalities who believe in the return of political life and see themselves as speaking for responsible and demanding citizens. This widespread but fragile image of the state constitutes a precondition for the end of political violence.

This immediately raises the question of the nature of this new state which claims to secure and guarantee civil peace and democratic discourse after its domination of the factions and the militia groups. This is not because this state is allogeneous, nor because it is a mere protectorate put in place by the Taif Accord and the Syrian-Lebanese Friendship Treaty which entrusts foreign policy and security concerns and even domestic politics (including legislative and constitutional matters) to Damascus. It is simply because, in spite of the effective capture of Lebanon's sovereignty by foreign powers, the new state must ultimately provide the framework for the restablishment of public order, the terms of civil peace and the modalities of political participation in Lebanon.

In contrast to the state of 1943, modelled on a segmented society and so tolerant of diversity as to border on anarchy, the new state which is being put in place in Lebanon conforms to the model of a strong, unifying and authoritatian state, dominated by security concerns. This type of state is well known in the Arab Middle East under the name of the "*mukhabarat* state" (after the Arabic word for intelligence services). Such a state has proved that it is capable of dismantling militant resistance networks (Cairo, 1972), forbidding opposition parties (Amman, 1974), crushing urban revolt (Hama, 1988), and

[141] D. Apter, **Democracy, violence and emancipatory movements: Notes for a theory of inversionary discourse**, UNRISD Discussion Paper, forthcoming.

bringing down a separatist guerilla movement (Kurdistan, 1988). Since its introduction into Lebanon, daily life has been normalized, criminal activity linked to the proliferation of armed local groups has diminished drastically, all militia groups (with the exception of *Hizbollah* as of early 1993) have been disarmed and disbanded, and law is applied equally in all regions of the country (except for the occupied South). For the relative security of the community group, the state has substituted unconditional collective security imposed by the modernized and reinforced security apparatuses of the police and army. The communitarian discourses of religion, exclusivist despite their pretensions to universalism, have been replaced with the discourse of an irrefutable and unified nation.

It goes without saying that the Lebanese populations are paying a high price for the return of state government. In the urgency of its struggle to assert itself, the regime frequently resorts to repression. In comparison with pre-war Lebanon, respect for civil rights and democratic liberties is clearly in retreat. In fact, the return of the state has not meant the end of political violence, but rather the substitution of a monopolistic government force for the multiple and antagonistic militia groups. Moreover, the process of substitution is taking place through violence. This cost might be considered acceptable in comparison with the outcome of other revolutionary processes, if it weren't for the fear that the new Lebanese state might break with its tradition of pluralism and negotiation and that it might establish a long term authoritarian tradition in order to prevent the return of civil war. It must be remembered that unitarian and authoritarian states in the Middle East, rather than surmounting sectarian divisions by the formal adoption of democracy and secularism, have all become patrimonial states run by one community, clan or family which imposes itself on the other segments of the population and exploits the *res publica* for its exclusive benefit. Lebanon narrowly escaped this outcome in the years between 1981 and 1984 when the Maronites of central Lebanon, under the leadership of Bashir, and then Amin Gemayel, thought that they might be able to dominate the entire country. It is certain that in the aftermath of the war this inclination towards, and fear of, hegemony will continue to embitter the political debate. It is likely to focus on Shi'ia demographic majority and the threat (real or imagined) of a theocratic state. It might even be suggested that the authoritarian state is already established in Lebanon through the channel of the Syrian Alawi officers and their local political clients.

There is another issue linked to the nature of the state which is even more important to the future of the democratic system in Lebanon. It is the question of the transformation of militia apparatuses into political organizations and their integration into the political process, and more specifically, of the ability of the warlords to become civilian participants in a democratic system. The Taif Accord provided for the incorporation of the members of the dismantled militia groups into the Lebanese Army or for their return to civilian life. Much could be said on the ease or difficulty with which the men who used the anonymity of a militiaman's role to terrorize and plunder have been able to resume their civilian lives or slip into the regular army, trading for example the meager salary of an *Amal* militiaman for the mediocre pay of an army infantryman. Undoubtedly, the ability to distance oneself from certain violent incidents, and to shift one's allegiance is in itself a condition for the adaptation of the fighter after the civil war. (But it should not be forgotten that the violence of 1975 echoes that of 1860.[142]) Postwar Lebanese society contains hundreds of pariahs, uprooted and isolated, deprived of the meaning which violence had given to their life at the heart of the sectarian group, and unable to imagine forms of activity and identity other than the "gangsterism" which was the formative experience of their adolescence.

[142] A. Beydoun, *op. cit.*, pp. 446-478.

As of early 1993, the conversion of the militia groups into political parties has not progressed significantly. At most they have become electoral machines. *Amal*'s organization, for example, functioned efficiently in the South, at the expense of traditional patrons, in the nomination of deputies in 1991 and in the legislative elections of 1992.[143] *Hizbollah*'s machine functioned similarly in Baalbek and Hermel. But the Kata'ib party's attempt at its conference of June 1992 to reorganize and free itself from the domination of the Lebanese Forces was a failure. None of the militia groups, in their party guises (FL, PSP, *Amal*), have been able to articulate a viable political project for the new Lebanon. Nor has any of the new parties or cultural organizations been able to mediate between the devastated society and the new security-oriented state; none of them can provide the lead in the urgent discussion on the relation between sectarianism and democracy. In fact, actually producing a definite program and entering into negotiations in the political arena is far more risky than falling back into vague millenarist discourse. This bleak scenario is aggravated by the exile or proletarization (due to the economic crisis in Lebanon as much as the violence) of those social groups - the middle classes, professionals and intellectuals - most suited to take charge and formulate a new plan for Lebanon.

Among the interlocutors of the new state one finds the odd scion of an old patrician family whose political influence crumbled along with the family's economic strength, and a few representatives of civil society whose presence is a wan sign of a new political will and participation. But the political system, ratifying the balance of forces which prevailed in 1989-1990, is dominated at the highest levels - ministers, deputies, and high level administrators - by the old warlords or militia chiefs. These men traded their camouflage uniforms for suits and ties, their "kalashes" for minister's portfolios, and their Koran for a profession of faith in democracy and its institutions. The rapidity with which they distanced themselves from violence is, in itself, a positive point, even if it suggests that they might just as quickly revert to their old ways in a crisis. But the important thing for these men is to preserve the benefits acquired through their positions of power (control over foreign commerce, contraband, arms sales, drug production and trafficking), even at the price of a complete contradiction of their discourse of respectability and legitimation. In the past, the community interest and the extraordinary conditions of the war justified their predations; now it is their membership in the apparatus of law and order and governance which warrants their behaviour. As always, they are concerned with the defence and promotion of the interests of a particular group at the expense of an entire nation. Their conversion to respectability holds no illusions. Forced to give up their arms and invited to lead a political struggle, the militia chiefs have introduced their old divisive tactics, brutal methods and spirit of discord in the very heart of the political system. They have become each other's political rivals in the governmental balance of power; they are unified only in questioning the idea and undermining the basis of a common Lebanese history.

The mode of articulation which defines the relationship between the authoritarian state and the militia political class and between that class and the Lebanese population which it claims to represent has little to do with the negotiation of interest groups or the construction of a social pact. As before the war, it remains a clientelist relation in which violence, instead of having been expelled to the margins of the system, has been introduced as a dynamic principle into its very core. While the hostilities have been suspended (an appreciable benefit for the population) it is not at all certain that either the

[143] *Amal* gains the largest number of new deputies as well as the re-enforcement of the Shi'i head of the Parliament's powers. See A.R. Norton, "Lebanon after Ta'if: Is the civil war over?", **The Middle East journal** N° 54 (3), 1991.

authoritarian state or the militia chiefs who run it have the inclination or the means to guarantee a return to civility.

On the future of counter-society

The Lebanese have various reactions to this obviously flawed new state. A majority passively accept the new system, enjoying their refound security and taking advantage of the rehabilitated public services, yet conscious that they are still compelled to participate in a clientelist system in order to live well and even to survive. A minority denounces the perversion of the communalism of 1943, devolved from the hands of a civil aristocracy into those of gangsters without culture or traditions. These people have chosen to live in exile. Another minority is constituted of those sections of the emancipatory movement that refused the compromise of Taif and still preserve their ideal of the liberation of society. This is the case, for example, of the Maronite mini-factions like the Guardians of the Cedar, hidden away in isolated mountain retreats, more preoccupied with spirituality than with politics, and who claim to devote themselves to the “moral rearmament” of Christians. This is the case also with the considerable fraction of *Hizbollah* that has regrouped around its old Secretary general Subhi al-Tufayli, which claims to be “loyal to the line of Imam Khomeyni”, denounces the Taif Accord and refuses to participate in elections. To these people, concerned not with the right to vote but with the liberation of society, the victory of *Hizbollah* in the legislative elections is of little significance.

Does this mean that there persist, on the margins of the state, pockets of subversive violence that neither surrendered nor peaked ? In the case of Lebanon in the 1990s, these groups have given up the use of violence in part because the regular armed forces of the new authoritarian state have a renewed superiority, but still more so because of their own loss of legitimacy in their communities. The only real exception is the armed struggle against the Israeli occupation in the South, essentially the realm of Islamic groups. This type of mobilization against an external enemy constitutes a current which could be parallelled by the periodic (“terrorist”) attacks on Syrian forces carried out by groups of the “Christian resistance”. These two types of mobilization against an external enemy constitute currents which could inspire mass movements in the future.

But the armed struggle for liberation is only one element of the long-term strategies of these movements. Like several of the Muslim Brotherhood movements in the Middle East, forced to keep a low profile by a powerful state and not particularly concerned with democratic niceties, the Lebanese Shi'i movement has temporarily abandoned its project of subverting the state in favor of a project of transformation of the roots of society - a project of social “re-Islamization”. Charitable institutions, schools and most importantly theological seminars and study and prayer groups have become the principal axes of its propaganda. The project focuses in particular on the young and on women, less directly susceptible to the discourse of the state. The working assumption of these movements is that upon reaching maturity, society will “naturally” choose to live in a theocratic, Islamic state. Nothing could be less certain, in light of the Iranian experience. But what is certain is that if the new Lebanese state has nothing more than clientelism and corruption to offer in terms of democratic participation and the benefits of new security and economic growth, it will sooner or later face another surge of communal and religious mobilization and a new escalation political violence.